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Trauma, Performativity, and Subjectivity in Art Practice

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PhD

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**THESIS
CONTAINS CD
ROM**

To my parents Eileen and Alfred Throp; also to my partner Wolf Kähler and our three children, George, Edith and Rufus Kähler whose love and support made this possible.

Many thanks also to my friend and colleague Dr Maria Walsh and to Chelsea College of Art and Design for their continued support throughout this period.

Special thanks to my supervisory team: Gerard Wilson, Claire Pajackowska and Michael Newman.

Abstract:

This is a practice based PhD of predominantly video works/installations which seek to examine, alongside the accompanying reflective writing on these works, a particular dynamic set up between the artwork and the spectator which allows a rethinking of the model of the subject's relation to the 'other'.

This investigation which is lead by my ongoing practice (presented as six artworks) is informed and underpinned by feminist theoretical concerns seeking a way out of the deadlock of Lacanian thinking which characterises the feminine as problematic (the other of the other). Though I make reference to psychoanalytic theories (as well as the writings of Deleuze), I will not give accounts of this background (though I will footnote key terms); I am therefore presuming a certain knowledge of these theories by my reader. The thesis (as practice and dissertation) explores more enabling accounts for the construction of identity which move beyond the fixed, traumatic model to propose that the encounter with the artwork enables more positive accounts of the self as fluid and open to change.

This shift which now proposes a more productive relation to desire and otherness has been opened up, particularly by Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti, through a consideration of Gilles Deleuze's notion of 'becoming' as a creative flow, an active force of connections and relations. This challenge to dominant accounts (both psychoanalytic and philosophical) that characterize desire negatively as a longing for something lost (tragically and impossibly), allows me to propose (theoretically and practically) the artwork as allowing us to 'become' by creating affect, where, immersed in a creative ongoing flow of connections and relations we 'become-hybrid' through an encounter with the other. As my contribution to knowledge and understanding, my thesis explores this affirmation of a new subjectivity through a sense of self as interactive (mobile) in the process of viewing; an inter-subjectivity which allows a freeing of the subject from the impulse to complete the self, allowing an engagement that does not set the subject against itself but produces new possibilities especially in a consideration of sexual difference.

My practice argues for an engagement and creative response which allows for a dialogue of difference as non-oppositional; sensuous and expansive, the artwork proposes a new relation to gender, as beyond hierarchical (traumatic and fixed) oppositional accounts of the self. This shifts from an account of sexuality as problematic (or not) to one where the viewer is open to a re-negotiation with questions of otherness and difference that underpin any notions of identity) to become productive of fluid accounts of the self.

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Introduction

This is a practice based PhD of predominantly video works/installations which examines, alongside the accompanying dissertation, a particular dynamic set up between the artwork and the spectator which might allow us to rethink the model of the subject's relation to an 'other'. My particular concern in this scenario is the expression of female sexuality in art practice, and although the question of the feminine remains fundamentally central to this thesis, my practice seeks to examine how the encounter with the artwork might enable a re-thinking of identity (our position as supposed stable subjects) and gender positions, and to put them into a discursive form. My methodology has been to produce artworks (my ongoing practice), which, though informed and underpinned by theoretical concerns, lead this investigation. The making of the artworks over the period of this research project enabled the thinking through of the aims for the PhD. The issues and questions generated within the artworks (as implicit) work as a form of argument (the 'doing' of the work) and form the basis for the written work. It is the artworks themselves therefore that lead the theoretical direction for this thesis; the written text becomes a reflective process on the issues which the artworks actively 'perform'. The artworks determine the status of the text as a way of enabling me to reflect critically on the concerns which drive this thesis.

I set out to explore how the artwork might challenge and disrupt dominant accounts of subject formation (predominantly psychoanalytic) characterised

as traumatic (1), and investigate what further possibilities/implications there might be for the female subject rather than that which either assigns her the status of an object (to be interpreted according to pre-existing patriarchal codes of recognition), or relegates her to the position as 'other', as 'pas-toute' (2) (with no way of being represented). My practice seeks to open up this deadlock, (particularly of Freudian/Lacanian concepts) and, through a deliberately deconstructive strategy – a 'doing', to examine how practice might enable more fluid possibilities which open the subject up to change. This is a feminist project led and informed by (and that engages with) practices and debates concerning subjectivity and gender. I am therefore engaging with a certain body of knowledge produced particularly since the 1970's which range from French Feminist psychoanalytic texts as well as practices by women artists which sought to contest and re-think accounts of subjectivity and identity. I am presuming a certain knowledge of these issues by my reader and will therefore not elaborate on many of the theories which inform my argument; nevertheless I will make clarification of certain key terms where appropriate. My contribution to this body of knowledge is made through the production of a series of original artworks and this accompanying text.

My investigation necessitates the possibility of conceptualising sexual difference outside the constrictive regime of identity and opposition and it is with this aim that I began this PhD. I start with the intention to ask how my practice might generate other possible accounts of the self which are not caught up in the traumatic relation to the symbolic order as formulated by dominant psychoanalytic accounts (predominantly Lacanian). (3) My project

constructs a practice, supported by a theoretical investigation, as discursive space that proposes a more open structure, which doesn't return the subject to fixed accounts of the self (as lacking). This is made possible in the relationship between the artwork and the viewer (in the encounter with the artwork) both for the producer and viewer of the work. My process of artmaking is also caught up in the same process of identity (subject formation) but explores encounters which allow for other possibilities, particularly those made possible by theories of Gilles Deleuze. These propose a rethinking of notions of the self as fluid and as in process rather than traumatic and fixed; they allow more enabling possibilities which conceptualize change as life-enhancing. Throughout this research, my reading, writing and making have been directing and re-directing each other to explore an undoing of fixity and the possibilities of opening up to the question of otherness. (4)

The artworks generated through my research (produced throughout this period of enquiry) not only challenge fixed accounts of the subject but also propose more enabling possibilities, engendering new forms of subjectivity for the viewer. I propose the artwork as generative and productive of transformative possibilities for the viewer of the work through a sense of the self as 'interactive', 'mobile', in the encounter with the work. I question whether such encounters might allow a freeing of the subject from the impulse to complete the self and enable an engagement that does not set the subject against itself but, rather, is productive of more fluid and mobile connections. I ask if this might allow more enabling possibilities for the construction of identity with difference (5) conceptualised outside the restrictive regime of

opposition and resemblance, to create affirmative connections and relations in which the viewer can invent their own ongoing possibilities. I ask how an affective encounter might open the subject to a 'becoming' (a Deleuzian account of the self) (6) – as ongoing, as always in process. In this way it is the practice itself, a space of making, rather than one of critical distance, which leads the theory and enables new possibilities. It is in the writing of this encounter that I am able to raise the question of the one I am addressing here; I am therefore using a performative strategy of implication and explication in the different sections of writing and employing different modes of address. I construct different voices when writing about the different works; the 'I' as writer and maker will shift to viewer – the 'you' who encounters and thereby becomes implicated in the work.

I am presenting six pieces of work with one other as an appendix. I discuss the encounters with these works largely in terms of spaces which allow a relation to the other as expansive and transformative, as spaces of implication where there is a possibility of an experience of the self as fluid, constantly in a process of change. This research is situated within the context of feminist practices and discourses which have opened up ways out of the restrictions of Lacanian theorizing and the problematising of the female body in representation. I have been particularly enabled initially by the work of Peggy Phelan and Judith Butler on performative ongoing strategies as a deliberate deconstructive challenge to the usual scene of interpellation (7) and to the question of how to revise such power structures. Performative strategies now, for me, point a way out of the melancholic relation of the self to loss; it

enables a mode of subjectivity liberated from ideological identification by mobilizing this absence (as in Freudian formulations) rather than the supposed seduction of the immobile spectator (which is how one might read Hannah Wilke's self-images). (8) I am also inspired by the writing of Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz who have been able to articulate, for feminist concerns, a shift away from Lacanian accounts to one opened up through a reading of Gilles Deleuze, specifically through an articulation of hybrid possibilities which describe other ways of being (a *becoming*) through re-conceptualising loss and desire as open and progressive rather than closed and traumatic. The artwork might now, through a mobilization of the subject, stage moments of transformation to engender a multiplicity of becomings; so practice itself becomes the site of undoing the repressive dualistic thinking of the Platonic tradition which gives a negative account of the woman.

My research contributes to these ongoing questions by proposing to consider how the question of subjectivity now might, in relation to the artwork, enable moments of becoming as opening the viewer up to change. It identifies the questions of desire and difference as central to the feminist project. My contribution is to extend these possibilities to the encounter with actual practices which produce these spaces as a new relation to the self, one which offers a new relation to gender as fluid and transformative.

My practice is located within the context of other artist's work (particularly since the 1970's), which have sought to rethink female sexuality and is indebted to the long legacy of feminist art practice. In this dissertation I

discuss particularly the work of Jemima Stehli and Lucy Gunning though the concerns of my own practice should rather be aligned more with those of Helen Chadwick and Pipilotti Rist.

Helen Chadwick, though immersed in feminist theory, was able to shift from her early work (*Ego Geometira Sum*) which still located the woman within the regime of narcissism and the voyeuristic gaze. Disregarding the continuing taboo on the body of the woman (for feminists) she produces with *Oval Court* (one of two installations as 'Of Mutability' 1986, ICA, London) an encounter for the viewer of the work which made a radical leap out of the dualism / binary structures which much of feminist theorizing was still caught up in.



Helen Chadwick *The Oval Court* (detail) 1984-86

Here, Chadwick was able to practice a liberating new relation to desire and the body which goes beyond the problematizing of the female as the object of the male gaze by resisting and insisting upon, with this installation, no privileged viewpoint for the spectator. Concerned myself, at the time, in the call to 'write the body' (Hélène Cixous), I was nevertheless shocked at how I experienced this work as thrilling at a personal level. Chadwick managed to produce for the viewer a leap outside of the experience of artwork as a defining and confirmation of the self. Here the so-called 'self' is transported beyond fixed boundaries; desire is turned away from lack to make continuous and endless connections, seeking no organising signifier. Here, in this circular blue pool of life and death, animal/ human / machine, hybrid connections are made which refuse to settle. Movement and flow produce heterogeneity and difference; it is an encounter that deranges our ordered schemes and produces a profound affectivity. I am drawn into this pool as outside of time and space, of bodies and matter; sensuous and fluid it undoes self/other oppositions. These are beautiful images; erotic and sensuous, they draw you in. Here a truly creative possibility is opened up; I am not returned to any original site of loss and trauma but transported beyond, to one of ongoing possibilities of transformation and change. This practices a positive account of bodies and desire, away from the restrictions of Lacanian theorising. This work opens up new possibilities for practices which engage with gender and subjectivity and one to which I intend to make a contribution.

Though Lacanian theory has been enabling to feminist projects, I am concerned in this research to find a way out of the unanswered question of



Pipilotti Rist *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* (installation view) 2005

Here the viewer is (similarly) immersed in an erotically charged scene.

Looking down into the pool of Chadwick's location has in Rist's installation been reversed as the viewer is here, in San Stae church, invited to take off their shoes and lie on soft furnishings in order to enjoy the erotic play of the huge highly coloured images projected onto the ceiling. In this neo-baroque location there is a proliferation of images which transform and disrupt ways of seeing and being seen; they are seductive, erotic and affective. In this work she shifts her hand-held camera from the usual eye-level of the vertical body down onto the horizontal – shooting upwards; here she lays you, the viewer,

onto your back to share this 'formless' positionality in a confusion of figure and ground. The camera moves rapidly and fluidly over and through, criss-crossing, multi-directional and disregarding focussed points of view; an incessant movement is created which breaks all boundaries. As a viewer, embraced in the architectural locations of these works, you are called into question; you lay down your dominant gaze. But you comply with a willingness; you are seduced into the possibility of embracing new concepts of desire.

Rist uses the techniques of advertising to seduce and entice. She is well known for playing the girl (her playful re-enactment in her video as: *I'm Not the Girl Who Misses Much* (1986), singing over the lyrics of Chris Isaacs). But she is also here *becoming-girl* in her collapsing of high art and mass-media / technology / virtual and real / nature and culture, in seductive and irresistible locations and assemblages. Though she employs all the tricks of advertising she is not the cosmetized woman of mass, popular imagery which ultimately seduces you in order to control you. Rist's *becoming-girl* produces a movement away from the self-image of narcissism to enable a new vocabulary of desire; it is an image which performs new possibilities other than the self-identificatory model.

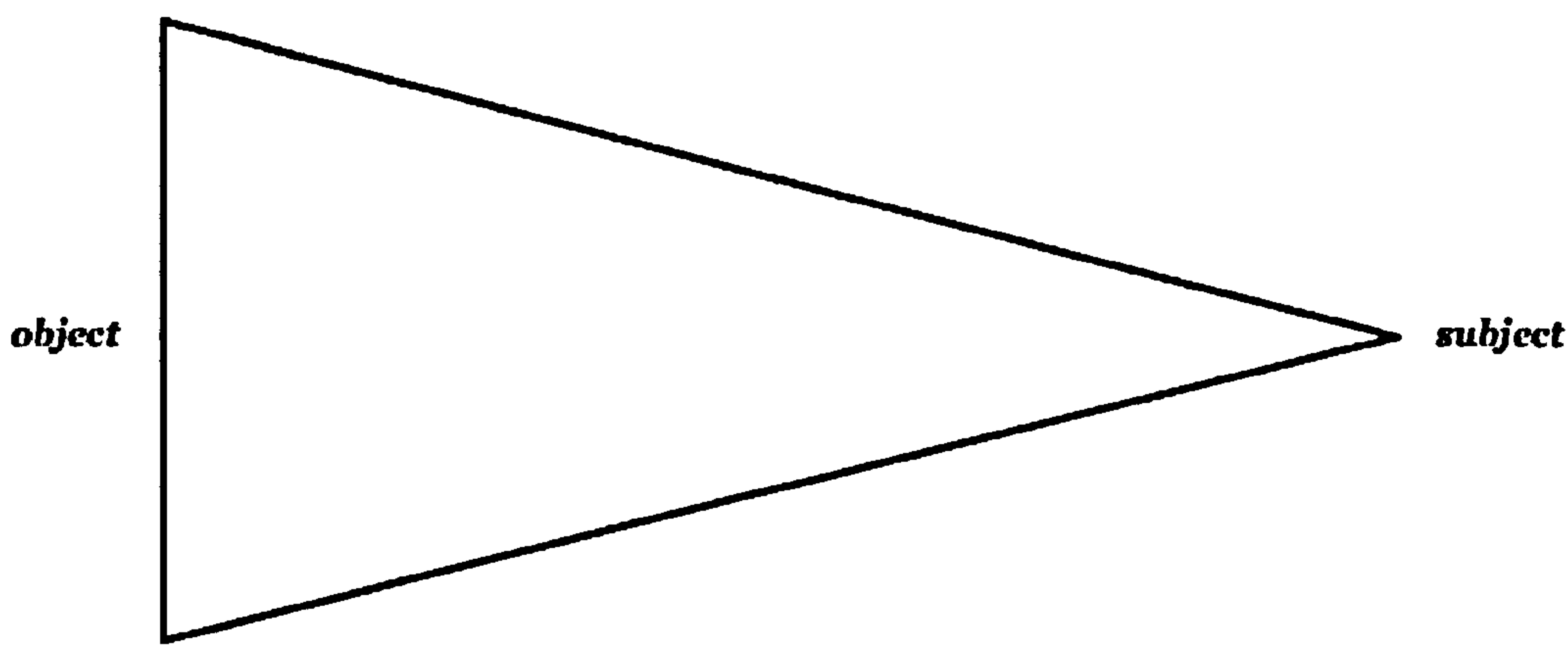
Rist's work is laced with a powerful anti-establishment intentionality - against the law. In *Ever is All Over* (2000), she constructs a powerful scene of the gorgeous carefree woman as joyfully striding along a city street smashing the windows of parked cars with a huge flower while confidently overtaken by a

smiling police-woman. The humour, joyful music and heightened colours again draw in the viewer (seduce the viewer even) into colluding in this scene which reverses the relation of the subject to the law. The hand held camera runs alongside the action – as the you behind the lens become accomplice and conspirator, collapsing you into the scene itself. You are caught up in the thrill of the action.

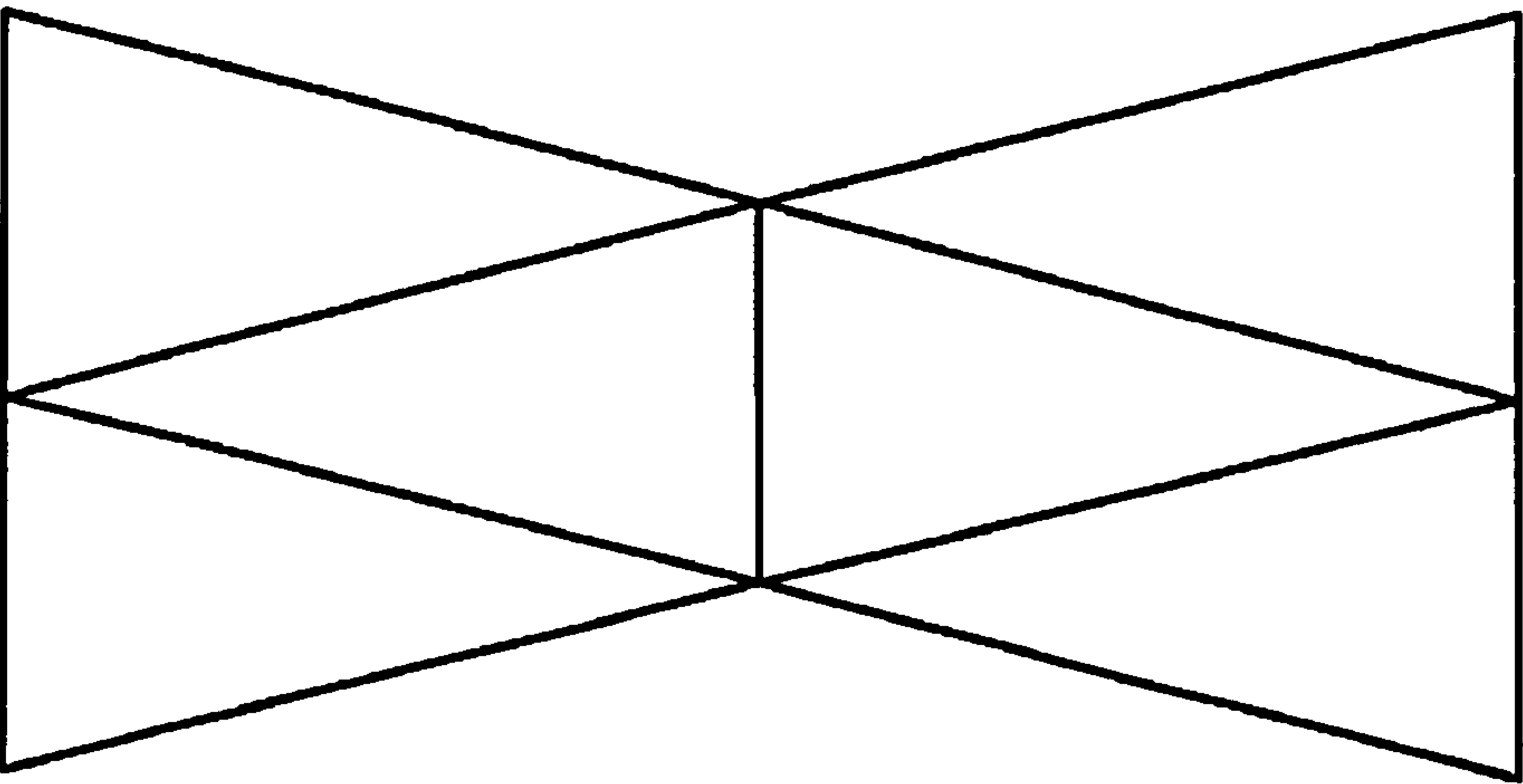
Rist engages with the law which hails her. ‘Being–girded’ (Althusser’s scene of interpellation) turns here into the ‘becoming-girl’ (of Deleuze); she re-organises and disrupts the usual scene of identification, refusing to be put in her (repressed, gendered) place through dislocating and disrupting points of view. It is such practices that elaborate new formulations for the subject and allow for new possibilities which challenge the viewer to re-consider and re-invent what they think they might know. Such practices demand a re-thinking of theory and it is what this thesis intends to do – to make an original contribution which continues this debate and shifts from a fixation with sexuality to one which re-thinks subjectivity through inventing new fluid spaces of change and the dispersal of identity. They shift the discourse away from hysterical enactments, away from the relation between narcissism and voyeurism to resituate desire and difference as offering new positive possibilities.

This shift in thinking can also be illustrated diagrammatically. I move from the ocularcentrism of Cartesian perspectival vision which places the viewer in a

fixed relation to the object (a position insisting on its safe distance to the other
– an identification with a gestalt of original wholeness):

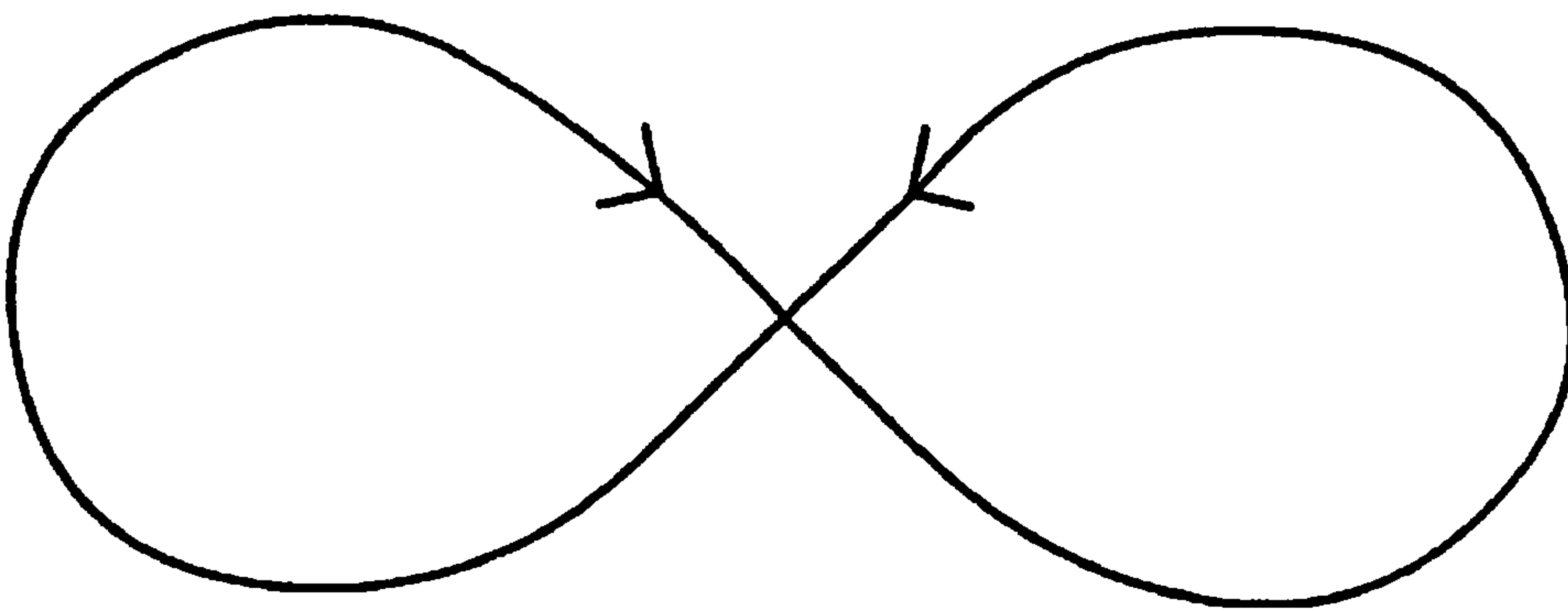


as insufficient when contemplating the complexity of an encounter which is inclusive of other signifiers (and indeed, that which escapes signification). I move on to consider Lacan’s diagram (schema) which is more enabling to my project; he takes this geometrical perspectival triangle and superimposes another so that it becomes two interpenetrating triangles (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p.106).



Here we have an account of the subject being constructed in a relation to the returned gaze so that the subject now becomes located at it's mid-point. Though there remains a disjunction between the desiring subject and its unattainable object, it nevertheless acknowledges the inter-subjective relationship of any viewing position, which is what my project is aiming to explore. Lacan's formulation of the subject remains caught up in binary logic and so only a move to a more fluid and shifting account of the relation to the other can help me think through other more enabling possibilities.

Deleuze proposes a mutual encounter, one which is mobile and demands that the viewer give up their static fixed viewpoint and destroys the hegemony of the fixed observer. He describes this as a figure eight where two interconnecting circles cross over each other.



This fluid movement across and between allows couplings which resist a structure of desire which produce such dualistic accounts of identity and does not perpetuate myths of wholeness. Deleuzian thinking then becomes the

theoretical elaboration of the fluid spaces which I am constructing in my video installations. I describe my final artwork *Love Stories* as initially conceived as a diagram; I construct the work so as to allow the viewer a mobility and fluidity which renegotiates the relation to the other – a mutual encounter which allows for change.

I begin my investigation with my video *Footnotes* (2000) and examine the possibilities of performative works. I explore this work in terms of the possibility that the 'injured subject' (called into being, caught up in a subjugated position to power, to discourse which precedes it) now has of performing this identity so as to radically re-situate and re-think notions of power and hierarchies. I ask if the 'performative' as a strategy – a 'doing of language' – can offer the possibility of an active re-location of the self. (9) This is not a project of affirmation for the woman (as second wave feminist theoreticians advocated – a writing of the feminine – an assertion of an essential being). Nor would it be enough for me to (merely) begin to thwart it (the subordinated role of woman). I intend to investigate through my practice and through the writing, this research, other possibilities which would liberate us all from such fixed notions of the subject (as expounded by psychoanalytic theory, my starting point). My practice will lead me, though I immerse myself in texts and the researching of artist's work; one will inform the other: the practice and the theory will cross over and inter-twine. The knowledge

produced will be this thesis – an examination of that process of investigation and an analysis of what I have made. It proposes thinking these spaces as mobile, constantly in flux.

This then becomes a strategy for my practice; performative practices allow the spectator to reframe and realign the self, to shift the injured subject (as woman, perhaps) from a passive to an active player in the scene that interpellates her. I propose this as enabling a shift from a logic of identity to a logic of difference (a relation to the other) which is produced in actual practices. I ask if performative strategies (the ‘doing’) which stage/produce that scene, and the encounter with the artwork, might enable a radical re-thinking of the relation between subject and object, viewer and artwork. In considering Jemima Stehli’s practice I am concerned nevertheless about possibilities of a hysterical mimetic enactment of the feminine as a regressive practice which might reinforce ‘feminine’ positions as some form of truth rather than allow performative enactments which enable new possibilities.

A series of ceramic heads I made led me to further consider the traumatic construction of subjectivity. I explore the objects as images which have already absorbed the trauma of some original event and discuss how these objects (as artworks) might allow a possible ‘unmaking’ of ourselves. I ask if there is a collision here between life and death which might be re-cooped in these images. I consider Mark Seltzer’s essay *Wound Culture* (10) which explores the breakdown or cross-over between the individual and the collective space and how such a moment might be embedded in these

artworks and pleasurably experienced by the viewer in order to allow a reconsideration of one's own relation to loss and desire – a re-thinking which might liberate us from the Freudian account of subject formation as traumatic. I consider the sensuous nature of the objects: the high gloss finish, the weight of the objects – their 'gorgeousness' as objects. In my collaborative publication *Speaking & Making* (presented in the appendices) I consider these objects again and what the possibilities might be for the art-object to open the viewer up to the space of non-fixity, of the self and other as always in process.

This led me to open up the question of the space of viewing with the three video works I exhibited at Trinity Buoy Wharf. (11) I consider how art practice might enable a shift to a possibly more radical question for the process of identity than that offered by the performative; one which might propose the fundamental question of whether one must always be returned to such a traumatic construction of identity. The works lead me to consider the possibility of an active ongoing doing, a 'becoming', arising out of the practice and the encounter with the artwork (the space of the artwork), to produce another relation of viewer and artwork as a making and remaking of each other. I propose it as a creative act of transformation – not a quest for meaning – where desire is not a relation to that which one has lost but is a desire to 'become other through what is more than oneself' (Deleuze), to produce a creative response through intensity and affects. I propose these artworks as not having representation as the goal – rather, invention itself, where 'becoming' does not have an end outside itself.

I write about my artworks in a way that elaborates the possible viewing experience for the work as well as my intentions for it; that the work itself implicates the viewer. In my three videos, *Rabbit* (2002), *Alien* (2002) and *Out of the Blue* (2003), I am especially concerned with a possible destabilising of a fixed notion of the self which is articulated in the process of viewing. The works explore the site of the encounter which, rather than returning the self to a self-repetition, allow for a creative re-positioning. My aim is to re-stage scenarios as re-enactments of the self – to that which constitutes us and our own agency as desiring subjects, where psychic and social spaces collapse in these settings into an ongoing visual present. This encounter becomes important for my project as it projects the gap between the represented and its failed representation back into the scenarios being staged – their narrative content. And it is this proposition that serves my investigation well; it's what my practice and writing intends to do. I am intent on undoing the inclination for a distanced, literal repetition/enactment of the lost object by the artwork for the viewing subject. I ask how the artwork as creative site might undo representations as sites of loss, to allow the collapse of the virtual and the real opposition. The subject is now opened up to allow more enabling possibilities than those proposed by Freud and Lacan. Elizabeth Grosz's writing as well as that of Rosi Braidotti (informed by Deleuze) has been particularly influential for me in proposing a self which is fluid and constantly being re-negotiated. I also consider the propositions of Donna Haraway and Sadie Plant for cyborgian hybridisation which, in its openness to an encounter with irreducible alterity, brings fluidity to identities which were once conceived as fixed. I reflect on my

artworks in relation to this theory, to contribute to and extend how these possibilities might be negotiated and practiced.

In my final piece of work for this project, *Love Stories (2004)*, a two-screen video installation at the Wallace Collection, London, I expand on the affective dimension of the encounter in this feminine space (the West Gallery) of erotic and sensuous display. I consider how the installation might produce a site of 'becoming' in which a creative flow, an active force of connections and relations, enables me to consider difference outside of the regime of opposition and resemblance (the Freudian/Lacanian model) in order to produce a concept of multiplicity which does not reduce identity to that of the same. I ask if the encounter with the artwork might enable the viewer a possibility of moving away from the restricted, and therefore alienated, spaces of sexuality towards the freedom of sensuality where desire is experienced positively – as an expansion – a 'becoming other' through what is more than oneself. In this way I consider how the work might challenge dominant accounts of desire - which is characterised negatively as a relation to lack, a longing for that which has been tragically lost (an original wholeness). Such new possibilities redefine our relation to gender and difference.

I finally explore how *Love Stories (2004)* might propose/enable/construct an experience of desire as an ongoing flow of connections, which are made again and again for the viewer, in order to allow for an opening to one's own projected fantasies and pleasures. I had intended for *Love Stories (2004)* to propose to encompass the viewer in a feminine space where desire and

longing are experienced as an active force, turned away from lack, 'a creative ongoing flow of connections and relations', to allow a new relation to the self. I explore in the writing how this space of erotic longing might implicate the viewer at various points of convergence so that connections can be made from one thing to another – as flows and endless connections – a 'becoming' in which the two are not set in opposition, but enrich each other (crossing each other in a figure 8, in 'perpetual dis-equilibrium' (Deleuze (1994): 100). I discuss the experience of this artwork in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's description of the crossing of two circles where the point of intersection becomes a site of the actual and the virtual. It is in these moments of connection, of crossing over, that connections can be made again and again – as flows, linking one to the other, where the two are not separate from each other (and inevitably in hierarchical conflict) but enrich each other to produce new, endless possibilities. This then becomes the link to a new relation to the feminine; encounters, affective and sensual, that allow an active movement which destabilise and collapse subject/object dualism and refuse to locate the viewing subject as the one who perceives.

I discuss how *Love Stories* (2004) proposes an erotic encounter in which there is a possibility for the viewer to experience the self in flux. This is an undermining of the social order as the love scenes played out on the two screens can be understood in terms of heteropathic identificatory processes. I intended through the compilation and editing of these scenes to generate purely libidinous outcomes which work against the economy of procreation (capitalism and the family). Through the editing process itself I intended to

undo the usual engagement with the love-scene and allow for a viewing experience of ongoing erotic and sensuous engagement. I explore this in the text alongside Luce Irigaray's poetic proposal for the gift of love as a sexual encounter which is without finality and outside of patriarchal reciprocity: it is an understanding of the structure of desire as endlessly displaced, one which allows for transformative possibilities. I now find that the work might enable a new relation to the concept of desire and therefore also a new relation to gender. Desire can be experienced in this work as ongoing, related to movement and time as fluid; it doesn't return the 'feminine' to the usual space of object (as the unsymbolisable kernel of identity, according to Lacan) which has been constructed in relation to loss. Desire can here be experienced and understood as freed from these negative aspects.

As my contribution to knowledge and understanding, I explore this affirmation of a new subjectivity through a sense of self as interactive in the process of viewing; an inter-subjectivity which might allow a freeing of the subject from the impulse to complete the self, through an engagement which is productive of new possibilities (rather than a site of completion), especially in consideration of sexual difference. I propose for *Love Stories (2004)* the possibility of offering a different outcome to the traditional model for the enjoyment of the woman and the concept of desire.

I am presenting in Appendix # 6 my collaborative projects with Maria Walsh in which we co-curate exhibitions and lead a research group *Subjectivity and Feminisms*. Through these projects I intend to continue to explore issues of

sexuality and subjectivity, initially through facilitating other artists' work (as well as our own) in curated exhibitions, publications and symposia. Three exhibition proposals to date consider practices that enable a new relation to the feminine, in order to re-negotiate a relation to the other as an unacknowledged part of the self, one which is in flux, set in motion and open to change. (12)

These projects will enable and promote the continuing shift in emphasis in some recent practices by women artists which focus less on the sexualised image of the female body, through being more concerned with generating a sensualization of the viewing encounter itself. My concern then is to pursue through further exhibitions and the research group, art practices (including my own) which present sexuality / the female body as opening up a possible space which engages the affective body of the viewer. The artwork can thereby open the viewer to an affective dimension which might re-locate and re-define difference and desire (as underpinning any identity) and therefore not be reducible to gender.

Notes

1. In psychoanalytic accounts, trauma marks the subject; it remains in excess of what it is possible to know and name; it is what remains outside of language. See Jean Laplanche & Jean-Bertrand Pontalis *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, p 466.

2. Lacan defines gender in terms of their different relation to the phallus; 'pas-toute' describes the woman as lacking the lack, whereas the man simply has a relation of lack. No one has the phallus.

3. In the traditional psychoanalytic account, trauma marks the limits of representation, the symbolic, as a missed encounter with the other. Trauma is that which is in excess of what it is possible to know and name – it remains outside of language. Psychoanalytic theory describe the formation of the subject as traumatic – it is the moment when one accounts for oneself in

a relation to that which has been lost. The subject is constituted in a relation to loss. See Caruth (1994)

4. I will be referring to the question 'otherness' throughout this thesis. Though this might also reference the Lacanian Other, I am generally referring to the one which is different to me – the term by which I define myself.

5. Western thought has described both difference and becoming in relation to the foundation of the subject, a grounding of identity; Deleuze challenges these tendencies, proposing the subject as always in process and not submitted to the law.

6. Deleuze proposes his notion of becoming as reversing the Platonic account of the self which dominates Western thought. It negates the idea of the foundation of being to propose that the subject has no original moment, but rather is in a continuous process; it is therefore anti-humanist. It also negates oppositional thought. To 'become' would be to be in a continuous state of fluid change. Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 233

7. The scene of interpellation which confers identity upon the subject. Butler refers to Althusser's account from his " Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly review Press, 1971)

8. Discussed by Amelia Jones in *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (1988):151

9. Peggy Phelan's writing is particularly relevant here, describing a possibility of an 'acting out' – as feminist performances – so that: 'in the mimicry, loss itself would help transform the repetitive force of trauma and might bring about a way to overcome it'. Hart and Phelan (1993). Theories of Lacan (as well as Derrida and others) have been helpful in opening up possible feminine spaces (also Irigaray, Kristeva, Butler and Phelan). Nevertheless, I still come to question this scene of awaiting the conferral of identity (Butler, referencing Althusser, questions whether the law and interpellation fail fully to constitute the subject it names); active or not, the female subject is still situated in a problematic relation to the other.

10. Seltzer, M. (1997), 'Wound Culture' in *Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere*.

11. Entitled *Close Encounters of the Other Kind* (May 2003).

12. One of these: *Transmogrifications*, showed at Danielle Arnaud gallery in May 2004 – see Appendix.

1.00 The Performativity of Gender. *Footnotes* (2000). (Four minute video, looped) See DVD # 1



Footnotes (2000) (3 mins.25secs. video, looped) Video stills.

1.1 Performative possibilities for the masquerade of woman; the body of the woman as cultural cliché

There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one “path”, the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of mimicry. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means always to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. (Irigaray (1985a): 76)

And this is exactly the place from which I started my investigation. My video work *Footnotes* (2000), 2000 (3 mins. 25 secs. video, looped) is where I began my proposal for this PhD. With the initial title *Trauma, Performativity and Subjectivity in Art Practice* one of the aims was to examine the Lacanian model for identity, characterised as traumatic – being in a relation to loss - (especially for the woman), and investigate whether within this theorising (and other psychoanalytic accounts) there could be a more enabling possibility for the subject made possible in a relation to the artwork. I proposed that my

process of art making is also caught up in that same process of identity (subject formation) and sought to question whether one is always returned to that traumatic construction. I intended to explore whether the process of making art, as well as the process of viewing (the place of the spectator), might allow a return for a more enabling possibility for the account of the self in and around the artwork itself. My plan of work states that I intend to continue to develop works which do not describe identity as fixed, but rather, consider the relation between self and other, and acts of interpretation, as themselves 'performative'. I ask whether art practice might 'perform' this complex relation to discourse and not return us to an endless 'acting out' of the traumatised subject which characterised so much contemporary practice.

So here is where I begin. With a tactic, a strategy: mimicking the feminine role (the masquerade of the woman) which has been assigned to me; and to assume this role deliberately. But in making this artwork, *Footnotes* (2000), I ask how might the work 'convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus begin to thwart it'? How might this artwork (it is an artwork, not an illustration of a reality) propose all these things? This might be my intention, but what can be the effect on the viewer (which includes myself) – as affirmative, undoing prescribed notions – in this case, the role relegated to the woman?



Footnotes (2000) (3 mins.25secs. video, looped) Video stills.

I had seen similar shoes to these in a bondage shop – most of them in large sizes (for men) – for drag acts - and considered the possibilities of the woman performing her own drag impersonation in them. On trying them on I was told that one (the male wearer) was not intended to walk or move in them; the lack of a sole made the possibility of walking defunct! These shoes were for the purpose of ‘posing as’ the woman. I had this pair made to fit my own foot.

They are constructed so as to constrict the foot into a completely erect position, unlike the usual angle of the high-heeled shoe with the toes hinged to the ground. The body is now rigidified into an erect verticality – an option for woman: to make her body into the body that every man desires (Freud’s phallic woman). In this piece of work, a video of the act of walking across the distance of the screen, I wanted to stage femininity as burdened with anxiety,

caught in a traumatic repetition. Here we have a performance of the female body acted out, as cultural cliché. (1)

1.2 Verticality and horizontality: Bataille's *Big Toe*

Bataille's essay 'The Big Toe' (Bataille 1995) describes the big toe as a remnant of our animality (the pre-human) – its link to the ground in a hinged position as a lever of the horizontal (animal) into the vertical (man) – the shift from nature to culture. Bataille insists that the big toe refused to be ennobled like the rest of the body in its erect phallic verticality. Woman, in her performance of elevating the foot in the high-heeled shoe continues that elevation ever further. Here, with this shoe, it is pushed to the limit; the hinge is eradicated fully so that the toes are also vertical, in line with the rest of the body. Mimicking her elevated role as woman (as representation of culture) by extending and exaggerating it, might the image in extending the excess of woman, be thwarting the 'assigned subordination', questioning/challenging this impossible role? Might the notion of the woman as hysteric (as phallic woman – claiming what she does not have by aligning her body with it) be thwarted by its very performance?

It is an awkward position to maintain. It is constantly under threat of a collapse. In the movement across the screen I intend to produce both an enjoyment (of the drag act: both seductive and fetishistic) for the spectator, mixed with an anxiety of its possible failure: of her toppling over back into a horizontal position – an enjoyment of the spectacle of woman and her

performance as an unstable category. Both elevated (as on a pedestal), and subordinated (as fixed by her limited possibilities), she 'acts out' her prescribed status.



Footnotes (2000) (3 mins.25secs. video, looped) Video stills.

The repetitive movement (across the screen) is obviously painful; the sound adds to this effect: not only the violent impact of metal stiletto on wood but also the strained noises produced by the performer's breathing - the woman's efforts (it was very painful to perform). The click of the heel (dominatrix) and the gasp from her effort (somewhat like sexual excitement) adds to the tension. The image is seductive, with a fetishization of the woman's body.

The shoe itself is a beautiful object (white patent leather with a fine stiletto heel), the movements graceful (somewhat like a giraffe – animal-like); there is an elegance in the suffering being acted out here. This particular shoe is almost like a prosthetic article (for the deformed foot) – medicalized, the nurse's white shoes; it is also bridal, signifying the wearer as pure. I chose

not to have red, though it might have been an obvious choice – it would immediately indicate the wearer's tartiness – too easy a role to slip into! White has more possibilities!

My practice, and an aim of this thesis, seeks to question the notion of cultural stereotyping. I have no stake in keeping up this verticality of culture which burdens the category of woman with acting it out; I'm interested in arguing for its fall. How then to rethink difference: how can this space (of representation), filled by the 'woman', be re-thought? This is central to my investigation.

Assuming the feminine role deliberately and so attempting to thwart it (as in introductory quote) is maybe not enough. The making of more works will lead this attempt - I have only just begun.

There is so much theory which supports these arguments, I can easily be overcome by it – it can take over, dominate my investigation and subordinate my practice, so I will relegate much of it in this section to the footnotes which will be particularly appropriate and pleasurable for me – particularly apt in this section of writing. From my artwork, elevated to the pedestal (foot or base, as that on which the sculptural object rests), to the theory which informs my investigation being now largely relegated to the footnotes (as that which the essay is based on), I might enable myself to speak, to think, to propose; to generate knowledge which is my whole reason to continue to make work as an artist and to produce this research.

1.3 Lacking the lack

Womanliness as masquerade (2), 'feminine' as affect, body of woman as constructed, feminine being as semblance or appearance (Copjec (2002): 67, 77), become urgent questions generated for me by this video. In *Footnotes* (2000), the *process* of the 'feminine' becomes apparent; there is a gap here made explicit by the exaggerated ideal woman which is being emulated and the noncompliant reality of the bodily awkwardness as the woman attempts the performance which this shoe (as a description/sign of femininity) demands. In discussing Cindy Sherman's photographs, Joan Copjec argues for the multiplicity of the feminine being, staged repeatedly by Sherman herself, so that: 'The implication here is not that the masquerade of femininity is only a semblance that hides a being which is underneath, but that semblance or appearance is what feminine being is.' (Copjec (2002): 74). (3) Sherman is clearly re-presenting any role which woman might be, to propose femininity itself as that which is being performed: there is nothing beneath or beyond this performance; it can only be mimicked.

With *Footnotes* (2000), am I making a trap for myself? Is it possible to understand the work as being caught up in an idea of masquerade as covering over another possible being for the woman? Amelia Jones argues that 1980s feminist art, in prohibiting the representation of the body, was concerned more with artistic strategies of production rather than subjectivity and identity. She passionately advocates body art (women's art practices which use their own body) to argue that such work solicits, rather than distances, the viewer by 'drawing her or him into the work of art as an

intersubjective exchange; these practices also elicit pleasures.' (Jones (1998):

31) She asserts that it is 'through an exploration of the ontology of body art that body-oriented practices can be mapped quite differently from their codification in the 1980s as essentialist and reactionary' (Jones (1998): 31).

In the viewing of this performance (this artwork), I pose a question as to the experience for the spectator and a question for my own investigation: might it allow for a self-reflexive participation in which one might come to understand one's own autobiographical self? As a woman and as an artist, I am both inside and outside of discourse (lacking the lack – as *pas-toute*). I am it and I produce it, I re-affirm, I contest. As a researcher, I seek to produce new knowledge (which is what the artwork proposes to do/purports). Issues of agency and contingency become urgent. Yet discourse is what produces me; how can I engage with this space offered to me as woman?

I have no interest to pursue a question of how the woman might gain access to an individuation. Jones describes well 'the implicit masculinist theorizations of the sexual subject/object of Lacan and Merleau-Ponty' and the reworking of their formulations through the perspective of sexual difference by a number of feminist philosophers. (4). She goes on to follow Simone de Beauvoir's argument that transcendent possibilities for the subject is a privilege only open to the male subject, whereas the woman:

finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego [...] which is essential and sovereign (de Beauvoir (1952): xxviii quoted in Jones (1998): 43).

Jones also comments on Judith Butler's concern (5) that Beauvoir's paradigm 'accounts for the masculine project of *disembodiment* by which men transcend their bodies by projecting their otherness (their immanence, their contingent corporeality) onto women' (Jones (1998): 43). Butler argues the fact that the other is, in fact, his alienated self establishes the essential interdependence of the disembodied man and the corporeally determined woman. She proposes that his disembodiment is only possible on the condition that women occupy their bodies as their essential and enslaving identities' (Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex*", 43). Whereas she (Butler) insists that gender is a *process* not a fact of biology. This is also my proposition in *Footnotes* (2000).

Jones proposes that the problematising of the representation of the female body can be seen as 'participating in the phallogentric dynamic of fetishism, whereby the female body can only be seen [...] as 'lacking' in relation to the mythical plenitude represented by the phallus' (Jones (1998): 24). Lacanian theorising of the oedipal subject asserts that the woman is 'not all' as the girl's initial pleasurable maternal imago is shifted to one which is identified within the cultural image-repertoire where her body becomes the very image of lack.

(6) It is this damning account of subjectivity which I am attempting to work through and rethink in this investigation. The artwork might enable another proposition.

It is the Freudian account of the castration crisis which places the girl in a relation to how she feels herself seen. Kaja Silverman describes this negative impact on the female subject.

The normative female subject is simultaneously coerced into an identification with anatomical and discursive insufficiency, and exhorted over and over again to aspire to the ideal of the “exceptional woman,” the woman whose extravagant physical beauty miraculously erases all marks of castration. She must thus embody both lack and its opposite: lack, so that the male subject’s phallic attributes can be oppositionally articulated; plenitude, so that she can become adequate to his desire. This leads to a classic “double bind”; the female subject is under the imperative to be what she is at the same time prevented from approximating, structurally as well as ontologically. (Silverman (1996): 33)

But the girl loves to act the girl: to don the garb and generate the rise in you; there’s pleasure here. Lacking the lack she is free to taunt you – remind you of your anxiety of flaccidity (of castration). Strutting, she performs it for you, you are anxious about the possibility of her failing. But she does not.

Gracefully (yet painfully) she continues endlessly (the footage is looped) to perform what she (you) does/do not have – or think you do not have – or rather, what you think she does not have – which makes you even more anxious about what you think you *do* have. (7) She rises to your (maybe here the ‘you’ is Lacanian theory) taunt of ‘not all’, she plays your (Lacan’s) game too – as you strut like the Cock you are (Monsieur Lacan) amongst your hens (which include Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous, etc.) taunting them to tell you what they have – or want (Freud’s unanswered question *Wass Will Das Weib*) – reminding them that they cannot know, cannot tell. Your self-loathing might become apparent in this game. *This* daughter wants to know more than you can tell, though you are the father (once removed from Freud) who named me, who ‘girled’ me – gave me the role that I am doomed to act out for you, so anxious were you when you looked up my grandmothers skirt! Though there

may be nothing more to know, there may be another way to be – and that's what I want to explore!

Is my work *Footnotes (2000)* also caught up in this dilemma; the 'double bind' of the female subject? Might humour help me out here? I can strut my stuff for you, and I might enjoy it, I am not necessarily debilitated by it and you know it. It is all a game, yet a thwarting of these power games is hopefully at play here in my work. But it's a game that castrates us all.

In this performance (in *Footnotes (2000)*) of the woman's relation to what she does not have (the phallus) (8) – as a repetition of anxiety, elegance, uncertainty and glossy exteriority – we are reminded that the Symbolic is based on repression. Kristeva (amongst other feminist theorists) did much to articulate a possible *jouissance beyond the phallus*, (the woman's knowledge of her own bodily pleasure), but the question remains whether such a strategy (of staging this sensation - which is anterior to the mark of the phallus) only serves to leave women in this impossible place: as psychotic, as hysteric. It has been a feminist strategy to re-write this 'not-all' not as 'lack' but as a female libidinal economy which is fluid, generous and multiple, in an endless movement which challenges the unity of the phallus. This is an ability to embrace difference and the other and is central to this thesis and an issue which I will later explore.

1.4 Homeovestism, 'Vogueing'.

Though *Footnotes (2000)* enacts, at the same time, the masquerade of femininity and the phallicization/fetishization of the woman's body, my intention would not be to continue this tedious game of the eroticization of the female body. For Mary Anne Doane, 'the riddle of femininity is initiated from the beginning in Freud's text as a question of masquerade' (Doane (1987): 177) as just a cover-up of the absence, of lack.(9) I am more interested to pursue here an account of the woman's relation to this phalliscisation of her body and find it relevant to consider Lorraine Gamman and Merja Makinen's discussion of the so-called 'feminine' woman as 'female homeovestite' – 'a woman who 'dresses up' as a caricature of a woman, for example Barbara Cartland or Barbara Windsor' (Gamman & Makinen (1994): 5).(10)

Footnotes (2000) demands that I consider the performance of the image of woman as subversive in its re-enactment, it's mimicry (as homeovestism?) rather than a simple reduction to the problematic Freudian Phallic Woman. Gamman and Makinen disagree with the usual feminist criticism of 'woman as spectacle' of 'the male gaze' (Gamman & Makinen (1994): 62) which has been equated with 'scopophilic' fetishism and where:

Because of the anxieties of the male unconscious, such discussion implies, (these) 'fetishised' images of powerful or fashionable woman will never change, because men 'need' phallic replacement when they see representations of women, to cope with their castration anxiety' (Gamman & Makinen (1994): 62)

They discuss 'vogueing' in relation to questions of fetishism, (Gamman & Makinen (1994): 68) a practice of some New York gay subcultures, particularly those of poor black and Hispanic drag queens, who dress up as

rich white celebrities and magazine models. They (Gamman and Makinen) argue that voguing is not only about transvestism but also includes 'homeovestism': dressing up in same sex apparel to accentuate stereotypical behaviour by typically emphasising sexual parts of the body in a celebration of this whole process of masquerade. Gamman and Makinen continue to describe voguing not only as a site for intersection of class, race and gender (as well as sexuality) but also emphasize the fact that this 'playful' behaviour 'often provides an astute commentary about the artificial nature of identity' (Gamman & Makinen (1994): 69) as it 'radically reveals the instability of identity in post-modern culture. It also reveals the perverse masquerade inherent in taken-for-granted cultural ideas about masculinity and femininity'. (Gamman & Makinen (1994): 70). (11)

Footnotes (2000) plays this game – in this case girl as girl, erotically acted out. This is a drag act, revealing/mimicking the unstable nature of identity – yours and mine – exhibitionist and voyeur alike. (12). *Footnotes (2000)* literally poses the question of how the subject (here, as 'woman') is formulated and 'practiced' and leads me to question how identities are constructed for us within existing power structures and to ask what option the subject has to re-assume or re-do them in different ways; to ask through what processes subjects come into existence, by what means they are constituted, and how these constructions work and, more importantly, how they fail.

Femininity is 'done' here in this artwork – as a performance – a painful, skilled act which is constantly on the verge of a possible failure. This repeated painful

action – beautiful, refined, practiced and performed - is nevertheless fraught with anxiety; the anxiety of its toppling – literally collapsing. *Footnotes (2000)* then, performs the woman as the image in order to collapse the passive/active dichotomy and reveal the image which protects the enigma of sexual difference and expose its emptiness (13); it plays out the intrinsic lack at the core of identity. Pain and pleasure are here enacted to reveal the image of femininity as ultimately empty (Irigaray's 'the horror of nothing to see') - which is the masquerade of femininity.

I now have to ask about the choice we might have to 'do' our various identities as 'femininity is an ideal which everyone always and only "imitates"' (Butler (1997) 145). (14) *Footnotes (2000)* highlights the fact that identity itself is performatively enacted, just as 'every act of "doing femininity" is always already its undoing' (Zylinska, (2001):145) and so reveal gender as an event which is constantly at risk of being destabilized and put into question.

As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalised effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labour of that norm. This instability is the deconstructing possibility in the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects by which 'sex' is stabilised, the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of 'sex' into a potentially productive crisis.' (Butler (1993): 10)

A 'productive crisis' being one which would free the subject from the false longing for fixity and the anxiety of failing to enact that which one has been named as. I am intending to contest the category of the female subject as a stable, self-evident entity. By enacting (mimicking and performing, 'doing') 'femininity' might I also cause an analysis of the process by which one comes

to assume one's position as a subject (in this case being 'girled' where I am relegated to a subordinate group of 'injured' subjects) and effect its undoing?

(15) How to effectively challenge existing structures which seek to keep strict oppositions in place by a 'doing' of identity? I am not suggesting that gender identity is a performance and neither is it the intention of this artwork

Footnotes (2000); it is rather my proposition (like Beauvoir) that woman (as a category) is something we 'do' rather than 'are' (as subject-in-process) and that, importantly, to assert that the performance pre-exists the performer. And so, I am able to think about my own practice as opening up possibilities for identities to be understood as possible *re-constructions* which might challenge and put into question existing power structures. The burden of femininity is clearly constructed as a performance in this particular video but it is also *performative* in its effect as an artwork. Performative strategies (16) now enable me to think my practice in more open-ended and positive ways which do not return the woman (or any category of subject) to a traumatic self.

This staging of femininity as a performative re-enactment of that which is a product of the law exposes the presumptive thinking (and theorizing) that there is such a possibility as an ontological state of being; it reveals the constructedness of sex and gender; that there is no essential self, only a complex relation to discourse. The artwork becomes this negotiation. In my video *Footnotes (2000)* the literal performance of femininity is enacted painfully in an endless repetition, a repetition which promotes an anxious anticipation of its collapse (though not to collapse into some possible 'natural' state). My intention is not that there might be a more 'natural' enactment of

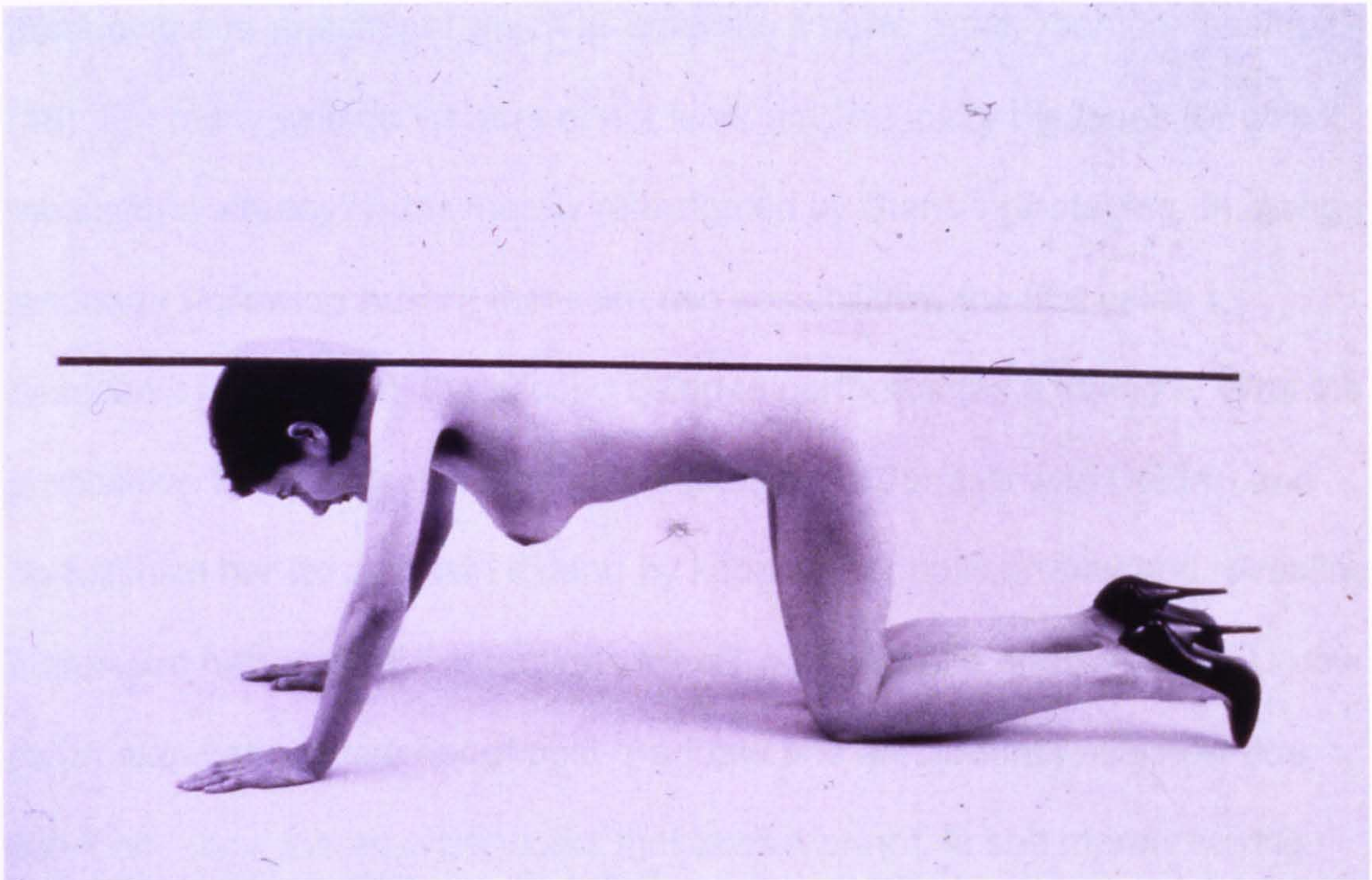
gender or sexed identities – even Freudian accounts describe femininity as a ‘masquerade’ - but rather to claim the constructed nature of gender, and further than that, to suggest (to the viewer in this case) that the subject is an effect of power, of discourse (is produced by and through it), and that there is no ‘outside’. Performative strategies are now enabling as they examine power structures and the possibilities of them being self-subverting rather than, for example, Lacanian accounts of the law as rigid and repressive. The body cannot be understood as stable and fixed, but rather as constructed by the law, and, like gender, is an ‘enactment’ that operates performatively – it is not a given. But might re-enactments re-enforce norms as well as the more desired effect of putting them into question to reveal their constructedness?

(17)

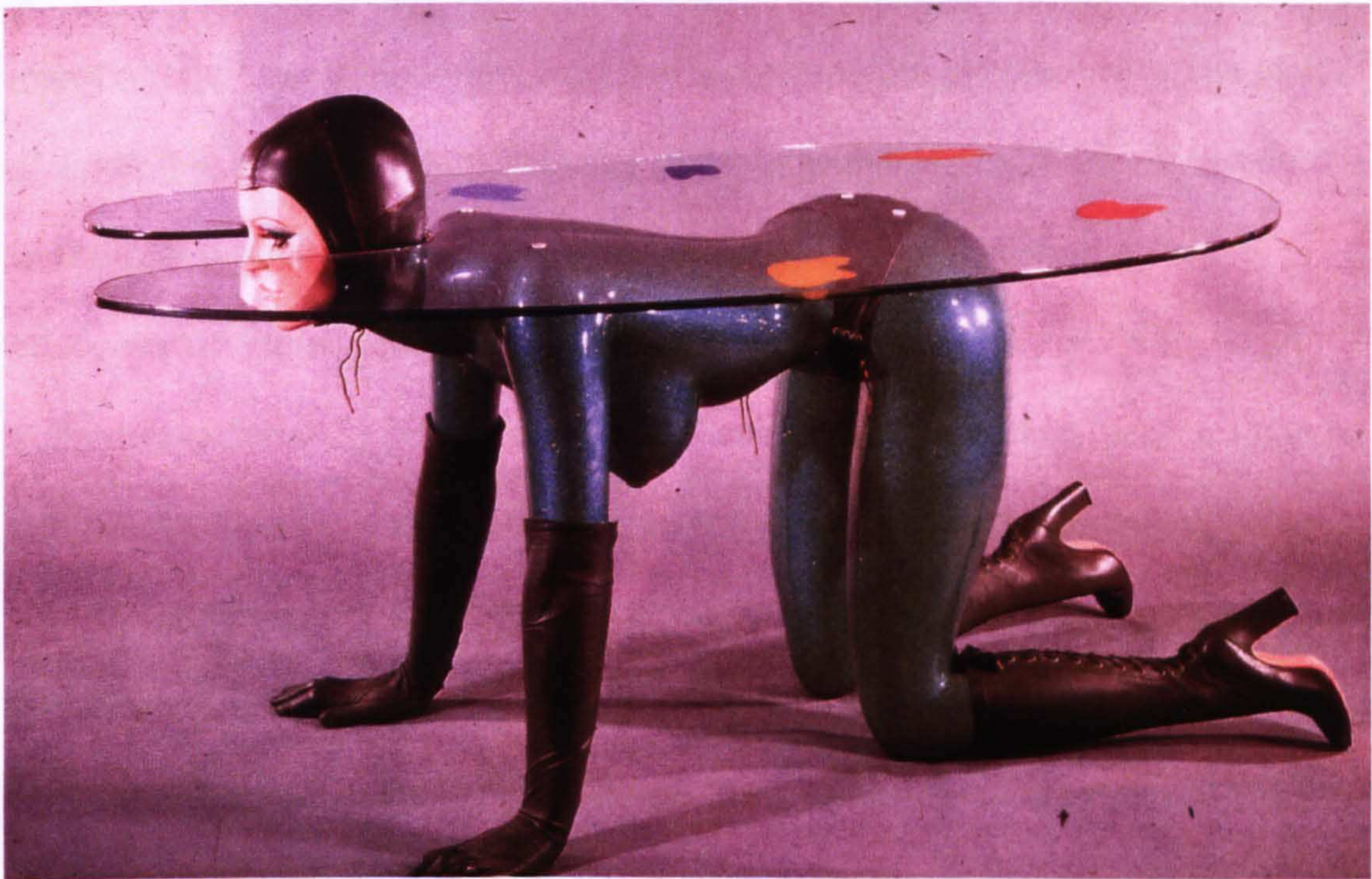
The critical task for feminism is [...] to locate strategies of subversive repetition [...] to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them. (Butler (1990): 188)

1.5 Problematics of ‘feminine’ performances: Jemima Stehli’s re-enactments

To examine this problematic I now explore the effects of Jemima Stehli’s fetishistic account of the woman as constructed by Alan Jones in his furniture series. Do they re-iterate the construct or contest it?



Jemima Stehli, *Table 2* (1997)



Alan Jones, *Green Table* (1972)

In taking on and repeating the injurious image of Alan Jones's *Green Table* (1972), might Jemima Stehli in her re-staging *Table 2* (1997) be merely

producing a re-enactment which re-enforces a norm rather than contesting it?

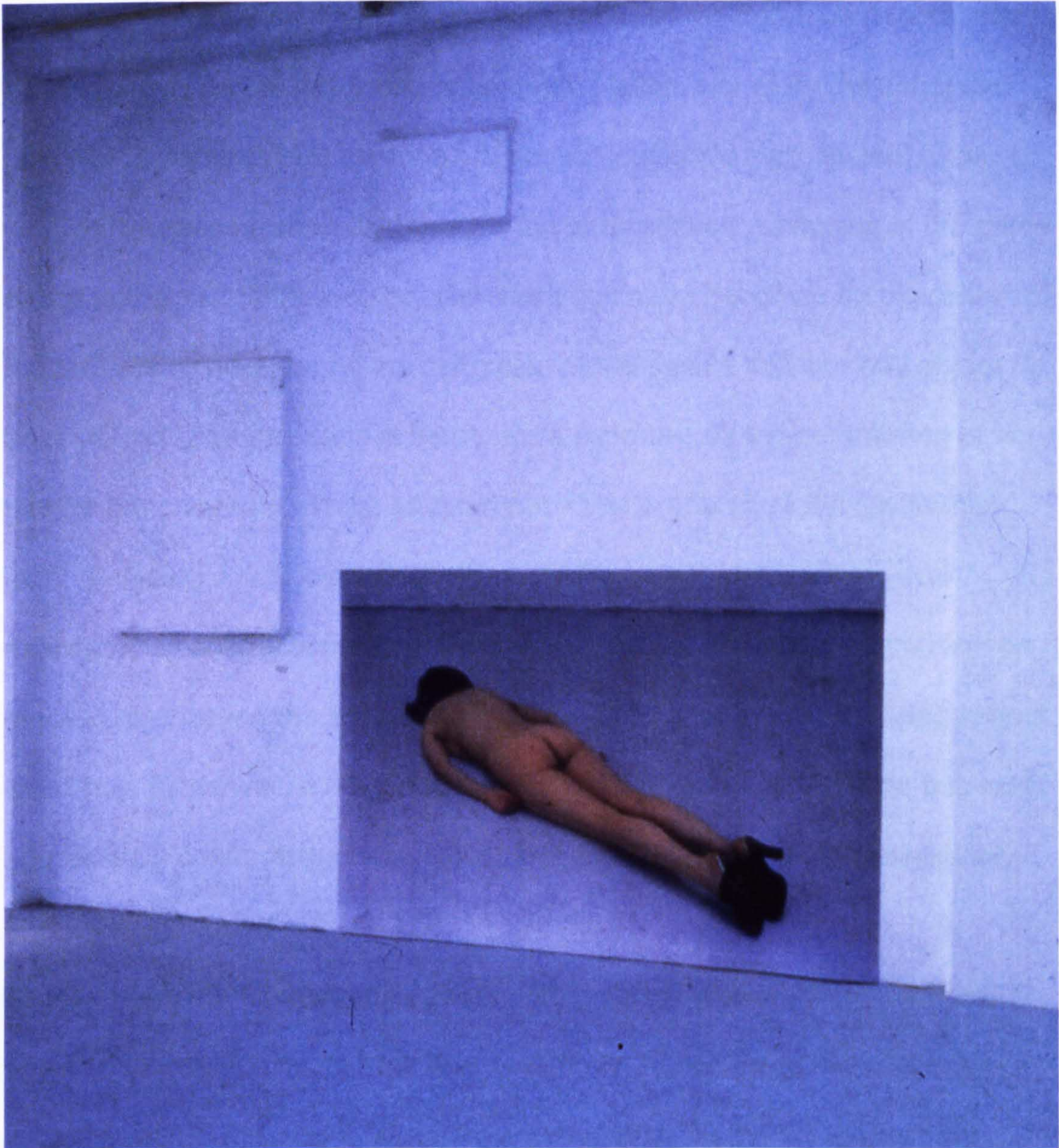
(18) For many women viewers of her work the first injury by Jones (or was it the second already?) was merely re-enforced by Stehli's re-staging. In *doing* language (following Austin) there are two possibilities, the first being to describe it (constative), the second being to perform it (as a 'doing'). Was the proposition to put herself as the object (instead of Jones's wife Deidre) and de-fetishize her (to a certain extent) by keeping her nails grubby and revealing under-arm hair, enough? Intentions are all very well and good – but as I know as an experienced teacher of post-graduate fine art students - it's how you pull it off – how the art-work works that does it or not. Is she merely saying 'actually, I (as real woman) really look like this – this is what a real woman looks like'? The problem is that there is no 'real' as a category which one might attempt to approximate, and that's perhaps the problem with this piece of work. It is also a problem in terms of the possibilities for 'performative' works which seek to propose a 'truer' account of experience (particularly advocated in identity politics) – as though there really is a possibility of an authentic experience (in this case Stehli presenting herself as 'real' woman in contrast to Jones's fantastical representation). In turning to the 'voice' which constitutes one (the Althusserian scene) as a subject, there is a danger of repeating hate speech, keeping the power structures in place in a hierarchy of social subordination; the subject, (here, the category of woman which is being re-described - or re-iterated - by Stehli) again constituted in a subordinate position. The very act of repetition is absolutely crucial; how might it, in an invocation which recalls prior injurious naming, confound rather than consolidate its injurious effect? In this piece by Stehli, is it enough to merely

resist or contest the accuracy of that interpellation? In answering to the injurious naming, in her re-doing, is she even making the insult worse? Interpellation is not descriptive, it is inaugurative. Its purpose is not to describe what is true or false (to evaluate it). Surely the real power is in the subjects 'acting out' of possibilities? And it is particularly the power of the artwork to re-work - 're-do' - that which we may think we already know.

Might a more effective re-enactment be one which would exceed and expose the artifice of the performance in the first place? (19) It's not so easy to mark the line between re-enacting the injured subject or to answer back with the same voice and de-stabilise the insult in the first place. Nevertheless Stehli does put the insult into question. The work is a series of life-size black and white photographs which re-do Jones's series, shifting them off the floor – away from the reified object to the space on the wall where they begin to contest the usual easy interpretation which Jones had counted on (apart from those produced by feminists such as Mulvey in her text cited above). But Stehli is right in her strategy of answering back to the injurious reduction of the woman to fetish object. There is no uncomplicated subject, only a complex relation to discourse. It is the playing out of this complex relationship which is the task of the artwork itself; to work the very moment of the failure of language/discourse to name effectively and fully.

What possibility is there to answer the law which proceeds and names me and so thwart the power structure which is established with the turn towards it,

the 'Who Me?' scenario? (20) In turning to the law, played up by Jones (as a secondary injury), is Stehli's work merely saying 'Well, actually I look rather different to the one 'described' by you – the real me has not such a shiny glamorised surface; the real woman can also be an artist with dirty fingernails, etc'. But then we get caught up in the ridiculous argument that Stehli herself is actually a beautiful woman of rather perfect proportions. Is she acting the girl rather too well here and so falling back into the role as subject of the voyeuristic gaze? Her narcissism may be too strong a lure, knowing of the pleasure elicited in these provocative scenes which divide subject and object and keep power in play. To play to the scopophilic look may be the lure of narcissism and exhibitionism and is what the woman is accused of. It may be empowering (as I argued in my essay on Jenny Ringley (*Make* magazine, vol. 2, 1999), but is that enough? The insult is not necessarily exposed nor the answering back anything more than another taunt. It may begin to thwart power structures but my question is how to undo them? Is Stehli's work here really subversive? Does it expose power structures and enable other possibilities or is there here a possible hysterical position, one which actually might be insisting in some truth of the body? (21)



Jemima Stehli, *Wearing Shoes Chosen by the Curator* (1998)

Stehli's *Wearing Shoes Chosen by the Curator* (1998), for me offers more enabling possibilities. In an exhibition of objects she has re-moved the image of her own performance as an object (naked) laying face down on the floor of the gallery up onto the nearby wall (as a photograph). The performance of herself (woman, naked) as an object is re-described as a process; a process in which she involves the curator of the show and describes in the work's title. Colluding with the curator to act out the role of woman as object (and thereby

removing her clothes – this woman as object must of course be naked), she insists that his part in this process be made visible. Her story goes that she gets him to agree to buy her a pair of shoes (inevitably high heeled) to be worn in the position she will chose for the performance. Colluding in the game of acting the part of the woman, the resulting image becomes an exposition of the process of viewing and the reification of the object. Woman and object become one. The message is made more assertive by the centralising of her butt for the camera – almost as a refusal – like a ‘you can kill me with this stuff’. Enacting a projected ideal, she puts the image into question and exposes the constructedness of the image. The photograph is placed low on the wall re-enacting the act captured by the photograph and becoming almost like a hole in the wall, a hole in representation, in discourse. For me this work successfully confronts the viewer with the account of one’s own subjectivity.

Might performative enactments (here as the category of woman) allow an appropriation which might be a kind of agency, repeating something in order to remake it? In this way it hopefully also exposes the fetishization of the voyeuristic gaze and opens up a distance between a normalizing of gender and that of a more critical appropriation. (22)

1.6 Subverting the law that constitutes the subject.

The question for such feminist practices might be of how to produce the art work as a subversive repetition, one which draws attention to the

constructedness of gender/identities (femininity in this instance). On being interpellated, 'girded' at birth, femininity is not a choice but the 'forcible citation of a norm' (Butler (1990): 148). Nevertheless, one does have the possibility of repeating one's gender differently, to 'do' one's gender in subversive or unexpected ways. It is possible to dispute the depressing scenario of the relationship to the law which is outlined by Althusser (Althusser 1969), where he describes the process of interpellation as the 'hailing' of a person by the law (a policeman) into his/her social (and ideological) position. To turn to the law in order to be constituted as a subject is a two-way process. The question prompts the retort, as the 'Who me?' ('what the hell have I done?') and so repeats the name which is so injuriously bestowed on one at this very moment. (23) To make work then which displaces the usual repletion; to repeat the scenario and embrace the terms that are injurious and turn power against itself might become more enabling. Stehli has taken the power structures which constitute the subject to work the excess – the subject's agency – to expose and work the very power relations by which the subject is evoked and allow possibilities of a radical reiteration.

In this parody of acting as a woman, in *Footnotes* (2000), I have attempted to propose that there is no original femaleness that is being enacted here. But rather, it is performative in that it has the power to produce what it names. Judith Butler's proposition and the attraction of her writing for me is that it incites possibilities for practice:

(t)he task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat, or, indeed to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself. (Butler (1990): 148)

In *Footnotes (2000)*, I have re-staged a performance of an injurious term (24), making visible the power relations which constitute the subject.

What leads to this reproduction? Clearly, it is not merely a mechanistic appropriation of norms, nor is it a voluntaristic appropriation. It is neither simple behaviourism nor a deliberate project. To the extent that it precedes the formation of the subject, it is not yet of the order of consciousness, and yet this involuntary compulsion is not a mechanistically induced effect. The notion of ritual suggests that it is performed, and that in the repetition of performance a belief is spawned, which is then incorporated into the performance in its subsequent operations. (Butler (1997): 119)

And this is exactly the repetition at work in *Footnotes (2000)*; but rather than a repetition that embraces the terms of the injurious speech act (by acting 'the girl' in this case) which has founded the subject (raising the question of whether there is a subject prior to this act or whether the act of naming constitutes the subject), I am asserting that the subject is formed in a continuous process of 'acquitting itself of the guilt imposed by the law' and that:

inherent to any performance is a compulsion to "acquit oneself", and so prior to any performance is an anxiety and a knowingness which becomes articulate and animating only on the accession of the reprimand. (Butler, 1997: 119)

Butler has been important to my thinking at this early point in this research as she makes sexuality the scene of cultural struggle.

The repetition in *Footnotes (2000)* seeks to undo the traumatic relation to the law. It is ongoing and endless so it refuses to be returned to a hysterical enactment of the role ascribed to 'woman'. It is a repetition which might have other possible outcomes, ones which set these seemingly stable systems in motion; one of a 'perpetual disequilibrium' (Olkowski (1999): 14), where new creative outcomes might be possible.

Though enabling as a subversive and empowering tactic, performative enactments are still described / caught up in this complex relation to a power which precedes and names the subject. Butler claims that this leaves the subject in a melancholic position (25) even though it questions and explores a relation to the law, its failures, and seeks ways of exposing its limits. It has been of enormous value in this investigation for deconstructing and destabilizing essentialist and so-called normative and naturalist assumptions about 'woman'.

Butler's theories remain enabling for my research. The mobilization of an excess that goes further than the marking of the self necessitates a moment to produce and to allow a possibility for new relations. And this is what art is: not representations of theories but a creative act of making new possibilities.

Notes

1. The shoe, as linked to feminine possibilities, litters culture. Footbinding as an eroticization of the female body while at the same time enslaving it. Dorothy's shoe in *The Wizard of Oz* which enable her to find her way. Cinderella – with the perfect size which enables her to become a princess. All of that on top of every woman's number one shopping list: have shoes – be the woman!!

2. Riviere (1929): 10. The essay which enabled so much feminist debate.

3. This is an anti-essentialist proposition which became central to much feminist discourse of the 1980's (particularly informed by Marxist critique of the spectatorial subject easily manipulated by the seductive effects of commodity culture) asserting the emphasis on the body as image, the registering of sexual difference in terms of the (visual) presence or absence of the phallus. More recent theorising is more helpful to my project as it has re-addressed a phenomenologically experienced dimension of the corporeal (particularly well argued in Amelia Jones' *Body Art*) which 'asks us to interrogate not only the politics of visibility but also the very structures through which the subject takes place through the inevitably eroticized exchange of interpretation'. (Jones (1998): 23)

4. Thus, Judith Butler pinpoints Merleau-Ponty's tendency, in the earlier work, to theorize self/other relations in terms that implicate without theorizing gender asymmetry. (Jones (1988): 42)
5. Butler (1986): 35-50.
6. In *The Acoustic Mirror*, Kaja Silverman describes how the initial pleasurable identification with the mother is replaced by an unpleasurable one through the process of the female castration crisis. (Silverman (1988): 141-59)
7. Lacan asserts that the woman 'becomes the phallus' which she does not have while a boy, identifying/equating his penis with the phallus, is able to 'have the phallus' (though not entirely) and stop 'being' it. He develops the Freudian account of castration in his 'Encore' lectures (to answer the question left unanswered by Freud 'What does Woman Want' (*Was will das Weib?*) and elaborate on the *not-all*) and attempts to taunt his own feminist students in the audience to tell him what they may have (as 'not-all') though he also attempts to describe her *jouissance* about which (according to him) nothing can be said. (Lacan 1975)
8. Woman as 'pas-toute' described by Jacques Lacan in *Encore*.
9. This is also not to reiterate the structures of fetishism that motivated the dismissal of images of women by many 1980's feminists (for example, Mary Kelly).
10. Gamman and Makinen's footnote on this reads: 'Louise Kaplan, *Female Perversion*, Pandora, London (1991), provides definition of the concept of 'homeovestism' on page 250. It should be noted that it was George Zavitzianos ('Homeovestism: Perverse Forms of Behaviour Including the Wearing of Clothes of the Same Sex, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 53 (1972): 471-7) who introduced the term to psychoanalytic debate in 1969 after reading Joan Riviere's arguments ('Womanliness as a Masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929): 303-13) published some 40 years earlier.'. Gamman and Makinen also note that Riviere 'suggested that the masquerade was used as a sort of fetishistic device to avoid anxiety by women from the perceived threat of punishment for being too much like men' (Gammon & Makinen (1994): 71).
11. Gamman and Makinen question Riviere and Kaplan's concept of the masquerade and the female homeovestite as actually pathologising the behaviour of 'all women who wear feminine clothes' (Gamman & Makinen (1994): 71). They particularly criticise Kaplan (quite rightly) for her claim that such a woman is 'unsure of her femininity, a woman who is afraid to openly acknowledge her masculine strivings!' They also contest her accusation that such a woman who 'colludes in the fetishization of her own body', is actually 'in dread of annihilation' (Kaplan (1991): 258) and therefore lacks 'natural femininity'. Kaplan is of course derisive of her findings that women might find sexual pleasure from dressing up, to claim that this 'exhibitionism' is in fact fetishistic (and therefore bad!). Gamman and Makinen are more realistic in their consideration of displays of femininity as part of the commodification of gender and dismiss an argument for it as fetishism (Gammon & Makinen (1994): 100).
12. See my essay, 'Jenny Cam & Peeping Tom', in *Make* magazine vol. 2 (1999), where I discuss female exhibitionism and male voyeurism.
13. Discussed by Parveen Adams (in Adams (1995)).
14. Judith Butler's writing proposes and insists on a subject as not an individual, but rather, a linguistic structure; it is not a given, it is more a matter of a 'doing' of identity.
15. Butler 1997b.
16. This 'doing' of language is taken from J.L. Austin *How To Do Things With Words* (Austin 1962). Illocutory and perlocutory speech acts. Performativity as an important enabling thinking for postmodern feminism and one which has informed this research and though I later move on through the breakthrough work of Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti towards a possibly

more enabling strategy for me following a Deleuzian account of desire – Butler's arguments and her account of 'the performative' as a strategy still hold sway for me as they deconstruct and destabilize those essentialist assumptions about gender /'the woman'.

17. In *Gender Trouble* Butler has insisted that all bodies are gendered from the beginning through social inscription and that there is no 'natural' body that pre-exists this.

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (Butler (1990): 33)

Butler claims that gender 'proves to be' performative: (Butler (1990): 9)

– that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed [...] There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results. (Butler (1990): 25)

Gender is constructed in and by language and discourse; there is no identity outside (or pre). Identity is performative as one does not 'do' language but rather, language 'does' gender. It is an act that brings into being what it names – effects of rather than the causes of discourses/the law. Butler's arguments therefore refuse any essentialist possibilities by insisting that 'bodies are produced which signify that law on and through the body' (Butler (1990):134-5). Gender is written on the body through 'the corporeal stylization of gender, the fantasised (*sic*) and fantastic figuration of the body' (Butler (1990): 135).

18. Laura Mulvey had already contested the ignorant insult of Jones in 'You don't know what is happening, do you, Mr Jones?' in Parker & Pollock (1987).

19. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler discusses artifice in the film *Paris Is Burning* (1991) where contestants at drag balls in New York City compete as various categories.

'Realness' is not exactly a category in which one competes; it is a standard that is used to judge any given performance within the established categories. And yet what determines the effect of realness is the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect. This effect is itself the result of an embodiment of norms, a reiteration of norms, [...] which is no particular body, but a morphological ideal that remains the standard which regulates the performance, but which no performance fully approximates. (Butler (1993): 129)

Butler describes these performances effecting realness to the extent

that it cannot be read. For 'reading' means taking something down, exposing what fails to work at the level of appearance, insulting or deriding someone. For a performance to work, then, means that a reading is no longer possible, or that a reading, an interpretation, appears to be a kind of transparent seeing, where what appears and what it means coincide. On the contrary, when what appears and how it is 'read' diverge, the artifice of the performance can be read as artifice; the ideal splits off from its appropriation. But the impossibility of reading means that the artifice works, the appropriation of realness appears to be achieved, the body performing and the ideal performed appear indistinguishable. (Butler, (1993): 129)

20. This concept of 'performativity' is from speech act theory of J.L. Austin's 'How To Do Things With Words' (Austin 1955), and Derrida's deconstruction of this in 'Signature Event Context' (Derrida 1982).

21. The hysteric's ability to easily fall into the poses she knows you want to see.

22. Butler, in *Bodies That Matter*, is in fact addressing the possibility of re-inscriptions, or 're-citations' as she calls them, as possibilities of subverting the law against itself. Continuing to discuss *Paris is Burning* she claims the drag acts in the film are:

not an appropriation of dominant culture in order to remain subordinated by its terms, but an appropriation that seeks to make over the terms of domination, a making over which is itself a kind of agency, a power in and as discourse, in and as performance, which appears in order to remake – and sometimes succeeds. (Butler (1993): 137)

Butler goes on to propose that it is possible to 'act' one's gender in ways which draw attention to its constructedness and claim that all gender is a form of parody. Parodic performances such as drag acts can therefore bring home the disjunction between the body of the performer and the gender that is being performed so that: 'In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself'. (Butler (1993): 137)

23. Butler describes two modalities of power (before and after the subject) and the irresolvable ambiguity between 'the power that forms the subject and the subject's "own" power.' (Butler (1997b): 15). She insists that the subject cannot be reduced to this power, similarly power reduced to the subject

If conditions of power are to persist, they must be reiterated; the subject is precisely the site of such reiteration, a repetition that is never merely mechanical. [...] The temporalization performed by reiteration traces the route by which power's appearance shifts and reverses: the perspective of power alters from what is always working on us from the outside and from the outset to what constitutes the sense of agency at work in our present acts and the futural expanse of their effects. (Butler, 1997b: 16)

24. 'Called by an injurious name, I come into social being and because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially', Butler asserts. (Butler (1997b): 104).

25. Even though Butler claims melancholia itself might be the way to affirmation and subversion.

2.00 On Trauma. *The Trauma Series of Ceramic Heads* (2001).

2.1 Traumatic naming of the subject

I began work on a series of ceramic high-gloss glazed life-sized 'heads' so that I might re-direct my research away from those issues foregrounded by the *Footnotes* (2000) video in order to explore the notion of the traumatic formation of the subject (1) and open up this investigation. My aim is now to shift the focus onto the question of how the artwork itself might enable the spectator to enter the space of something rather than be a representation of that traumatic naming that constitutes the speaking subject (as explored in the previous work); as something that drives beyond the law and interpellation; to explore the failure of interpellation fully to constitute the subject it names (2).



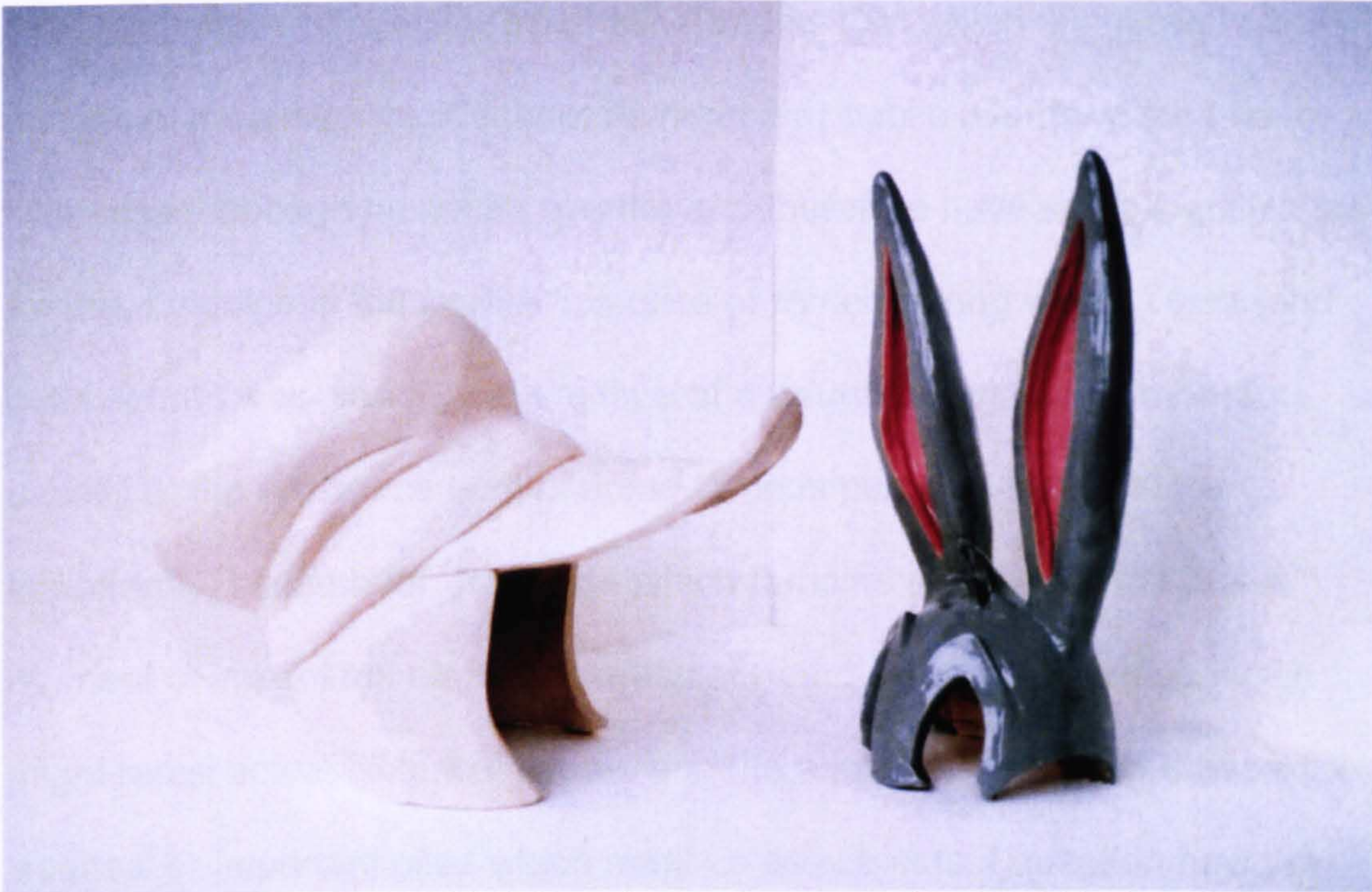
Dallas: 22nd November 1965 (2001). Glazed ceramic, approx: 12 x10 x9 inches.



Cuba Libre (2001) Glazed ceramic, approx: 12 x10 x9 inches.



Marilyn (2001) Glazed ceramic, approx: 12 x10 x9 inches.



Buggs Bunny & Elma Fudd (2001) Glazed ceramic, approx: 12 x10 x14 inches; 6x7x16 inches.

I was considering the relationship we have to culturally recognisable past events as eruptions and embodied narratives that make up our personal histories and produce us (our collective memories), where particular images recall the actual historical event. These might be profoundly felt moments of historical significance that touched us deeply/internally and remain with us throughout our lives and mark us through these 'sites' of tragedy. I intend to question how these traumatic incidents might have a relation to phantastical internal traumas that constitute us as subjects. The images I chose to explore are particular to my generation: they are of particular historical significance as actual events which touched my life and mark my experience of shared social/external/historical events. In this way I am attempting another approach to the repetition/re-signification of cultural norms – that which might constitute us as subjects.

I source images of specific 'traumatic' (and as that which might retain an excess of meaning which cannot be resolved) public events which I have 'witnessed' (though as media events) and therefore have some significance for me. I indulge in the familiar exercise of remembering where I was (and even, what I was wearing) at the time of a traumatic significant moment – usually at the announcement of some famous person's death. More importantly, I search for the image which remains and recalls not just a moment of impact but also of a particular mood or 'look'; an image which might recall actual historical events and the emotional impact of these 'scenes' or important sites which mark us as subjects. I question how the emotion is attached to an image – as memory; not only personal but collectively shared.

2.2 Repetition as a working through

How might these images (which I have recalled and selected) of particular significance for me take on other possibilities as artworks which don't merely 're-present' the event (the traumatic account of the self) as a repetition of the same – allowing no working through. (3). I want to explore the possibility of the experience of the artwork which cannot merely mimic the event but possibly allow a moving on, a working through. Might the artwork allow the spectator to overcome the rigidity of trauma and the compulsive repetition of the same?

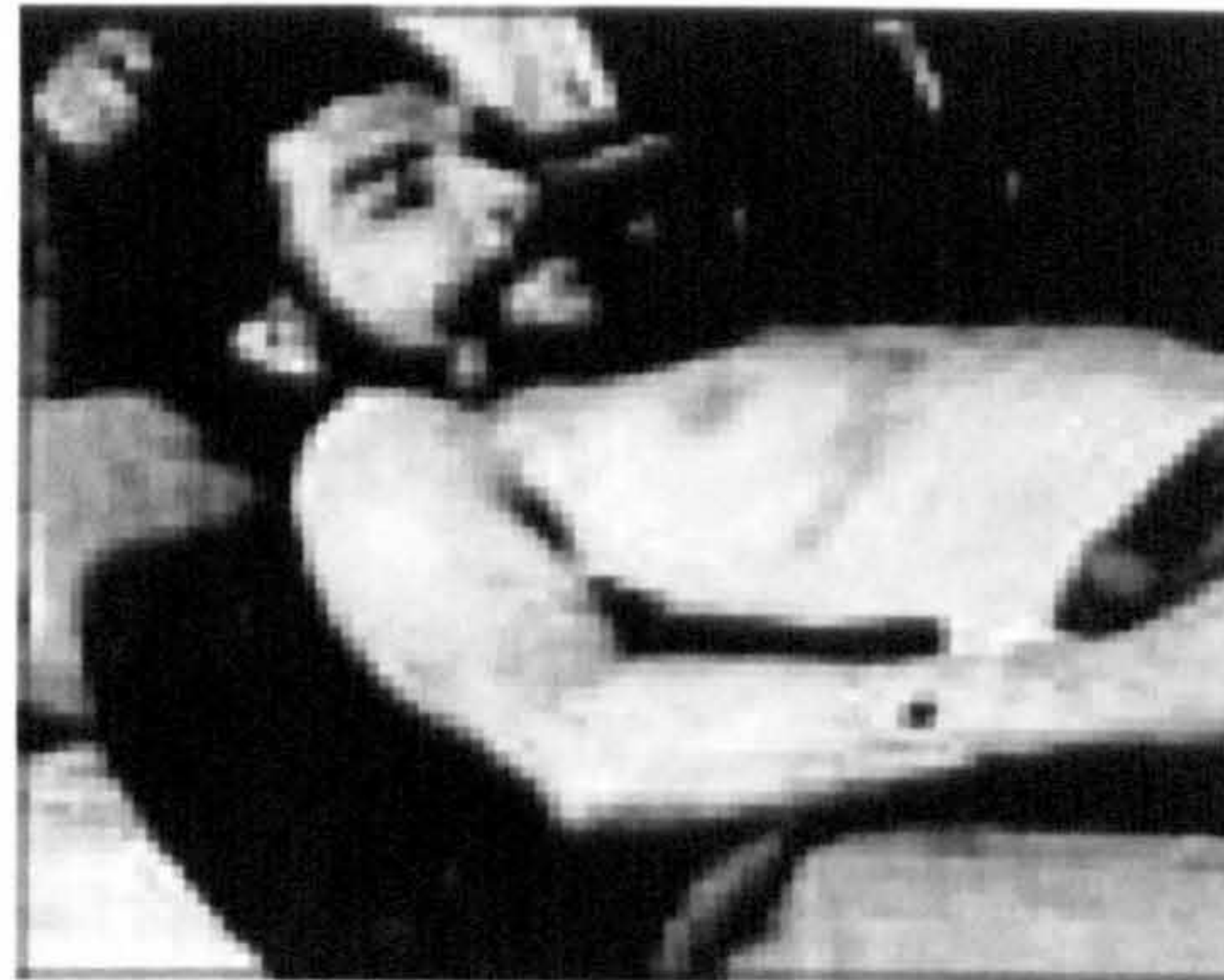
I intend to explore how that actual image (e.g. here as actual film footage of Kennedy's assassination) might do more than act as testimony to a tragic incident. I (intuitively) decide to 're-stage' these accounts as objects which might recall/rework the experience or moment. As artworks, sculptural objects, I intend to explore how they might allow another repetition. These are not objects merely demanding a sensationalized recognition of a former event. Nevertheless the image/ the artwork demands a recognition – but not necessarily a re-enactment of that initial event. The spectacle is revisited not merely to allow nostalgic melancholic identification, but to propose a possible moving on through associative emotional response. Might there now be a possibility of a shift from the injured subject, from the passive recipient, to a positive 'doing' – the artwork as productive of affect – to allow new possibilities? I discussed Stehli's work as a re-doing of the injurious naming of the subject (as woman); I now want to examine another account of traumatic recognition and how the artwork might allow a working through.

The images I select are easily recognisable: Jackie Kennedy with that distinctive haircut and pink pill-box hat on the day of her husband's assassination –repeated many times as film documentation of her arrival in Dallas earlier that day and from the film footage shot on a home-movie by a guy in the crowd who kept the film rolling as the cortege passed - to provide testimony of the repeated shots to the presidents head. I call the piece *Dallas: 22 November 1965*, though the work I make is a ceramic 'portrait' of Jackie's hair and hat – devoid of her face.



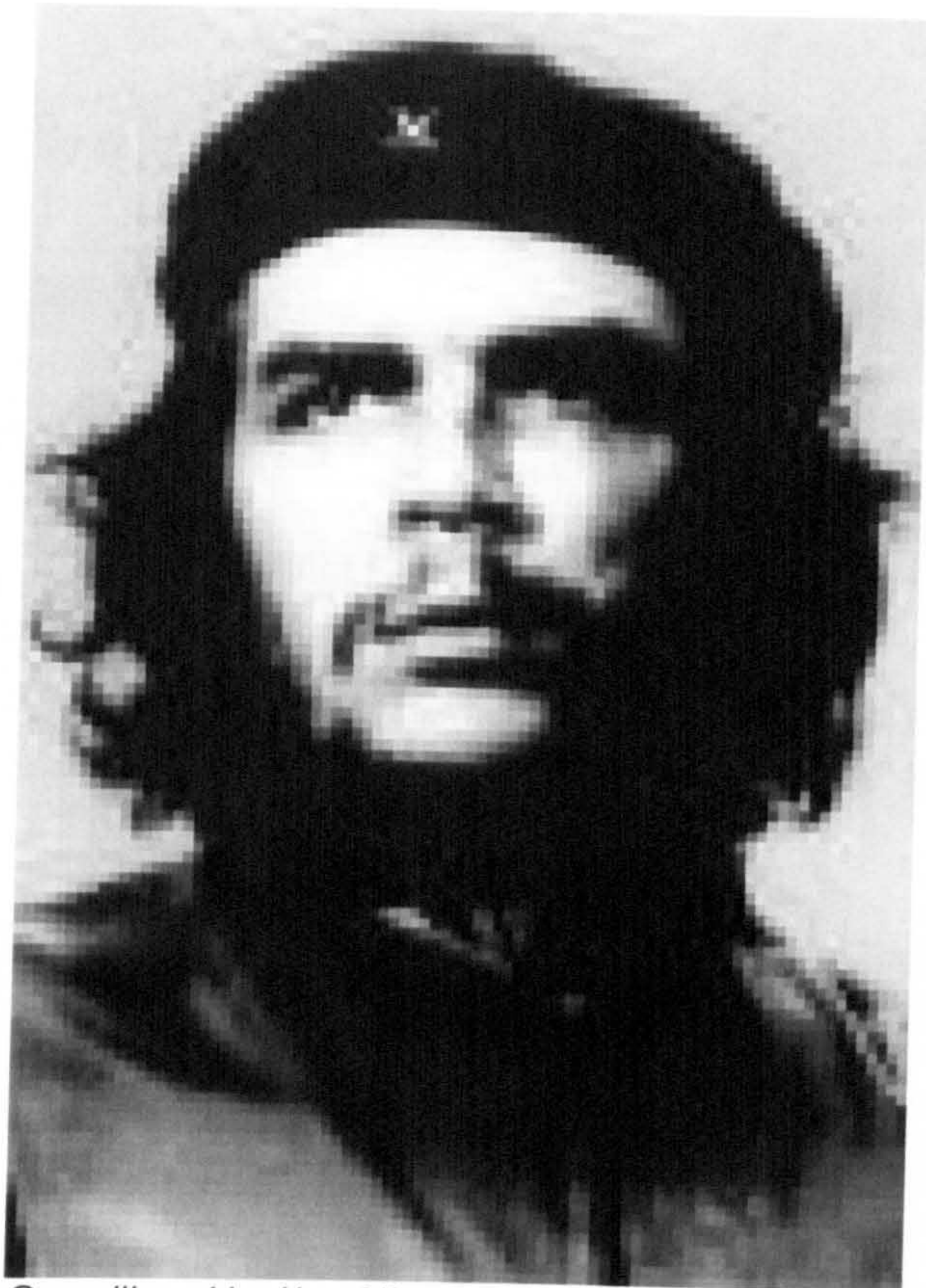
Oliver Stone *JFK* (1991) film stills; (showing TV coverage and images from the footage taken of the assassination by Abraham Zapruder)

Similarly I download images of the dead Che Guevara – the photographs which testified that the legend was finally dead; laid out like Christ – his body brutally dishevelled. Hero, revolutionary, middle-class doctor, an extremely handsome and charismatic figure: ‘Now there’s a man!’



Richard Gott 1967; from a series of photographs of the dead body of Che Guevara

Yet I do not take these ‘original’ images (maybe they are too sensational) – instead I use the most reproduced poster ever with the beret and red star (from the elegiac and evocative snapshot *Guerrillero Heróico* by Alberto Korda in 1960). I call the artwork *Cuba Libre*. I render this image in clay. Again, without the face. The hollow head will refuse the sentimentalising of the character – the person can be reduced almost to a silhouette, a cartoon-like reduction which captures the likeness – the clues to the persona – to the actual moment. Though my works are not about icons; this is not iconic symbolism.



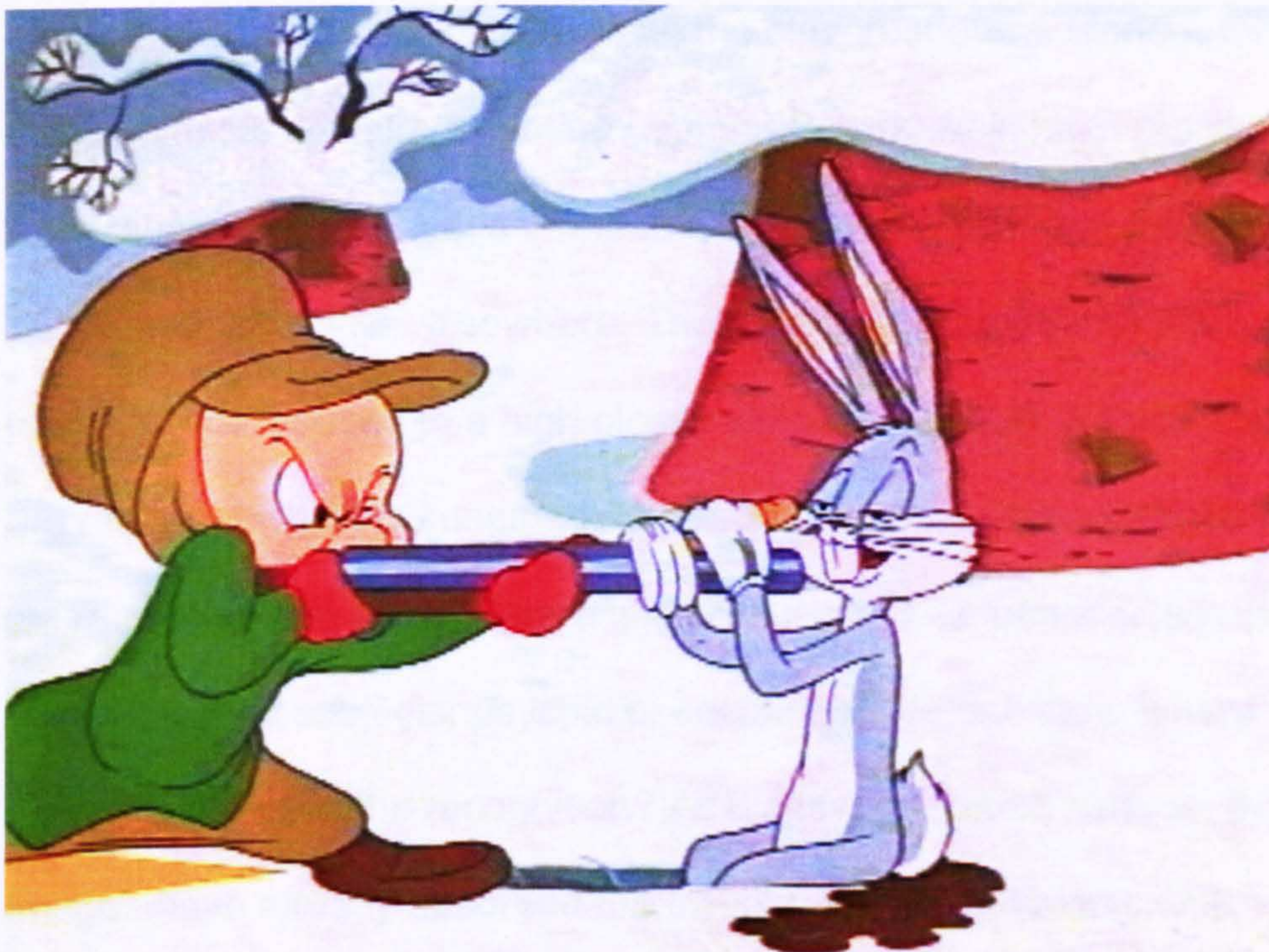
Guerrillero Heróico Alberto Korda 1960; photograph

For *Marilyn* I take the Warhol silkscreen where she is already reduced to a traumatic repetition. I call the work *Marilyn*; with her I have no other option.



Andy Warhol *Marilyn* 1962; silkscreen print

Next I make the couple locked into a repeated game of kill and be killed: Elmer Fudd's tragic attempts to shoot the 'wabbit!' and Bugs Bunny's joyful/pleasurable, clever/mockingly evasion, where death is defied time and time again. A delightful enactment of an overcoming of death; to repeat for our pleasure the re-assuring game, again and again.



Looney Tunes, (featuring Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd) created 1940

2.3 The object as pleasurable – overcoming the traumatic

The objects I make are life-size; they are heavy (clay) and hand-crafted; they are like three-dimensional cartoon reproductions. I re-work the original image by reducing it to a linear rendition and then re-work it three-dimensionally in clay. Like Warhol's silk-screen images of famous people, in its reproduction – through its materiality, I intend its impact on the viewer to be more 'touching' than the image which it references. The object references/recalls an image

which is more than the ones which I use for reference (above). I have no use for the face – the features which supposedly express the character: the eyes. No, what is recognisable, what allows recognition, is located elsewhere. Hollowing out the head I remove the bodily, that which retains the wound, and keep only an exterior shell – that elsewhere. The pink pill-box on that flicked up hair-do; the beret with the red star atop that dishevelled mane; the low side-parting on the peroxide blonde, the cleverest dumb blonde. Elma reduced to his ridiculous hunting cap and Buggs: well, he is reproduced everywhere – it's the angle of those ears! Like the scene of trauma itself – its punctum (tuché) - lies elsewhere. These hollowed forms, like 60s pop imagery, are reduced to a high glossy simplicity – as all surface - almost as if the real (that which is imagined) is pre-absorbed into the symbolic (that which we recognise and know). There is a confusion of its location, just as there is in our location as subjects; psychic or social; outside or inside; where might I place it? Where is the recognition? As glossy, gorgeous surface, these images have already absorbed the trauma of the original site which they also signify. Jackie's hat and hair-do, almost everyone gets the image straight away - 'Oh yes, it's Jackie O' (though at the time she was still Mrs Kennedy). And then the time needed to reflectyet it is the object itself which is so striking, I think. It brings us back to the present – it is so in the now, physically pleasurable in its objectness. I need to consider how the effect is located in the image; how might the artwork, as image, enable an opening up of the process of a 'doing' of ourselves?

We all recognise them. The 'original' image is universally encoded in an image which continues to mark our history. These are especially of my generation. They are not about the witnessing of the event (even though, in fact, I did, though not directly); it is the image itself that carries the weight of an impossible understanding. They are tragic scenes; they are memorials to that loss – yet they are more positively about the desire that we projected onto them in their lives as well as in their deaths. The objects – the artworks – are pleasurable. Made of clay, the objects are vulnerable: they are liable to break. Handcrafted, they allow the scrutiny we like to bring to the handmade. They are heavy; they have a luscious high gloss glaze – a hard, shiny surface of dense colour; the simplified lines and contours flattening out any depth yet enveloping rather than distancing the viewer. I want to consider this 'present' – this moment of viewing – generated by the object itself, its *nowness*, in relation to the past: that of memory or location outside of this here and now of viewing, of experiencing this physical object. Might there be a possibility of past and present recouped in this object – in the encounter with the materiality of it? Is there collusion between life and death at the same moment which is re-cooped not only in the image, but more strongly in the object itself? Might these objects act as triggers for some kind of understanding of what it is to be human? Might our desire be allowed to be played out in the scrutiny of these objects in a similar way that the fetish might cover over lack and stand in place of the moment of anxiety and realisation of castration? But these are not fetishistic objects (though one might make that presumption), as the fetish may act as a replacement for loss and act as a screen against traumatic memory (recognition and disavowal are often evidenced in the fetish object).

Yet there is a temporal structure to fetishism which arrests time and reveals anxiety; here loss can be integrated as acts of reparation (Klein).

2.4 Trauma as 'switch point' between bodily and psychic spaces

Though the artwork might allow us to re-experience or rather recount these sites of tragedy I am more interested to consider this repetition – this going back – as a way of moving on, as positive rather than melancholic. These are accounts of my witnessing; my implication in the social histories and personal memories that constitute me. I shift the repetition, your recognition – not back to that initial moment; I seek to keep it moving - between the artist/individual and the collective (the audience). This becomes an important consideration for the development of my thesis – I am not interested to merely move from one model to yet another and not to repeat a stereotype by returning; this is not another return to the static. Maybe this can enable the subject to be freed from fixity through a possible oscillating between; might this be a way forward for me?

Mark Seltzer (4) discusses the breakdown between the individual and the collective in contemporary culture as a 'wound culture' and describes it as evidenced in collective spectacle – one of the crucial sites where private desires and public space cross, 'a mimetic contagion of self and other as the basis of the social bond'. Seltzer claims that trauma has not only come to function as the 'switch point' between 'bodily and psychic orders', but also

'between individual and collective, private and public orders of things.' (Seltzer 1997): 5)

The wound and its strange attractions have become one way, that is, of locating the violence and the erotics, the erotic violence, at the crossing point of private fantasy and collective space: one way of locating what I have been calling the pathological public sphere.' (Seltzer (1997): 5)

In the Freudian account, trauma is a borderline concept between the physical and the psychical and is located only in the subject. Seltzer is now extending this in terms of contemporary culture to the site of 'the pathological public sphere' which is

everywhere crossed by the vague and shifting lines between the singularity or privacy of the subject, on the one side , and collective forms of representation, exhibition, and witnessing, on the other. Along these lines, the trauma has surfaced as a sort of crossing-point of the "psycho-social". (Seltzer (1997): 4)

Seltzer is arguing for a contemporary account of trauma which is more complicated than has been so far understood and describes a 'hypnotic mimetic identification' to be crucial to this understanding:

Trauma is, at least in part, an extreme expression of the mimetic compulsion – a photography at the level of the subject. But in this mimetic compulsion, I have argued, one detects a minimalist model of a sociality (the mimetic contagion of self and other as the basis of the social bond). One detects the model of a sociality bound to pathology. In short, the opening of relation to others (the "sympathetic" social bond) is at the same time the traumatic collapse of boundaries between self and other (a yielding of identity to identification). In this way, the opening of a possibility of relation to others also opens the possibility of violence: the mimetic identification at the expense of the subject and a violence in the name of violated singularity and self-difference. The opening towards others is drawn to the collective spectacle of torn and open bodies and persons: a wounding and gaping towards others in the pathological public sphere. (Seltzer (1997): 9)

The memory (past) and the now – this moment of viewing the objects – I am suggesting, can be brought together in these ceramic heads. They are very physically in the present as art objects, but the recognition (of some elsewhere) allows the past to be relocated into the now. The viewer has this ongoing relation between the reference (the event they recall) and the

pleasurable viewing of the object in the now; an oscillation between these spaces. My subjectivity could also be understood as likewise produced as an oscillation between: in the act of viewing (the relationship with the art object) one might come to understand the self as this space of oscillation – or gap ‘between’.

In continuing to describe this ‘mimetic coalescence of self and other’, Seltzer insists on a breakdown as to the determination of the subject: ‘the self-determined or the event-determined subject; the subject as cause or as caused; the subject as the producer of representation or their product’.

The attribution of trauma, in any event, bends event-reference to self-reference, transferring interest from the event (real or posited) to the subject’s (self-) representation. (Seltzer (1997): 11)

Hal Foster describes this ‘parallax’ (technically the angle of displacement of an object caused by the movement of its observer so that the framing of the two depends upon the position). (5) Maybe that is what the making of these ceramic heads has allowed me to work through; to consider subjectivity / the experience of the self, as breaking with linear causality and determination. These objects might allow for the spectator to enter the space of something (the now as oscillation between) rather than producing a representation as flashback. Might they allow for a reconsideration of one’s own relation to desire and loss? For my ongoing thesis it demands the rethinking of the theories that might go beyond the Freudian account of subject formation as traumatic.

Seltzer's essay argues the close relationship of trauma to representation in popular culture where virtual reality and trauma collapse.

The popular notion of trauma is premised on a failure of distinction between the figurative and the literal, between the virtual and the real – representations, it seems, have the same power to wound as acts. (Seltzer (1997): 12)

Now this whole argument, that one might be 'devoured by representations', I have always found rather shallow. The gap between the real and representation may well be more sophisticated in post-modern discourse with a collapse or failure of distance between act or perception and representation. But we are all pretty sophisticated viewers. We may no longer duck as the first viewers of cinema did as the train came hurtling towards the camera, though I am astonished that the audience of *The Blair Witch Project* (6) believed the 'evidence' that was being acted out on the screen (as literalization of fantasy, where perception and representation seem to change places?). But maybe this was not about an actual visual collapse of real and fantasy – but more of the effective publicity stunt pulled off by the makers of the film which we, as cinema goers were unaccustomed to. All very familiar territory for Žižek, as Seltzer, in a footnote, explains:

'the subject "is" this very gap that separates the cause from the effect' (Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, p122). Žižek, it will be recalled, directly opposes the Lacanian account to the deconstructive account: "the substantial hard kernel of the Real" is irreducible to the effects of representation. But the Real remains bound to what he calls "a fundamental ambiguity" as to the status of representation (*Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993, pp 36-43) (Seltzer (1997): 13 n31)

Seltzer insists repeatedly that 'the boundaries have come down between inside and outside', and that 'there is an endless switching between them,

along the lines of this binding of trauma to mechanisms of representation and reduplication [...] the traumatic reversal between fantasy and the public sphere' (Seltzer (1997): 15). (6) He elaborates on the condition of the contemporary accounts of the subject and the social order – imagined as 'the *intervention* of the external, mechanical, symbolic order and the Real of the subject as the point where the social-symbolic order fails (Žižek, *Metastases*, p. 117).' (Seltzer (1997): 18)

But I am concerned here about how my work might diverge from this – as in the moment of viewing the artwork; I need to consider where this is leading me. I need to refocus for this research project. Working on *Speaking & Making* offers this possibility.

2.5 *Speaking & Making*; a collaborative project (Appendix #1)

In my publication *Speaking & Making*, I attempt to explore this complexity in a piece of writing entitled 'Re-counting and re-working'. I describe the images which 'remain culturally recognisable and which resonate as a part of our experience, our histories, constituting the society which produces us as individuals' (Appendix #1: 1). I am referring to the series of ceramic heads described above. I write in a way to address the reader directly, in an emotional way: I address the reader as 'you'. I want to implicate you also in these accounts, as a part of my own experience, my generation – 'you' as the reader I share being alive on this planet with – right now. I want to address the 'you', the reader, as colluding in this knowledge and challenge 'you' to share with my experience of common events in our lives and how we might come to

experience them. I want to touch the reader as the objects might, as the events themselves might have – some time back, as ‘I know I share them with you’ (Appendix #1: 2). To challenge you to be ‘always doing the work of translation; to be always in the gap between.’ (Appendix #1: 2) But rather than suggesting that these ‘events’ which we remember and which describe us, are more than just memories, I ask if they might allow a renegotiation of one’s position as a subject:

In order that I might be able to face my own death?
In order that I might be able to mourn and not be forever trapped in a melancholic relation to the world, trapped in loss? (Appendix #1: 2)

I ask if I might enable a new relation to the other by allowing for more than can ever be known. I ask if these objects which you might enjoy might allow a relation to loss which is not fraught with anxiety but which might allow ‘an opening up of this impossibility of the subject – of the knowing of oneself’. I tell you that ‘Art is about the *real* which is difficult to testify to; it exceeds the personal.’ (Appendix #1: 3). I tell you that:

To make work then is not to look to establish a truth / an original or authentic self – but to carry on the process of the past – to allow a referring forward. To make work is to be in that process, in that continuous flux. (Appendix #1: 3)

In this piece of writing I insist that I want to make work to open you the viewer up to the space of non-fixity of self and other, and allow for new meanings to be possible in the experience of the work.

In order to allow ‘a re-telling which might invite yet another re-telling – as always in process – as are all our selves.’ (Appendix #1: 3)

And it is this proposition which is now urgent for this investigation: to propose the artwork as allowing this space as open for the viewer to make their own

possibilities. But it is the practice which needs to lead this; the space of viewing needs to be further explored.

Notes

1. My thesis begins from the psychoanalytic account of subjectivity well described by Jacques Lacan in his 'Mirror Stage', the first version which he gave at the Fourteenth Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association in Marienbad, August 3, 1936.
2. Althusser 1969, as discussed in *Footnotes (2000)* section of this thesis.
3. As described in Lacan's seminar 'The Unconscious & Repetition', the point where the subject is touched by an image: the *tuché*.
4. Seltzer 1997.
5. Laplanche describes subjectivity structured as traumatic: 'it takes two traumas to make a trauma' : we come to know who we are only through deferred action (*nachtraglichkeit*) – 'a continuous process of protention and retention – anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts' – 'a differed action that throws over any simple scheme of before and after, cause and effect, origin and repetition'. (Laplanche 1976)
6. *The Blair Witch Project* 1997, directed by David Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, was marketed as footage which had been found in the woods in Maryland US after three film students had disappeared there a year earlier while shooting a documentary, rather than what it actually was: fiction.
7. Seltzer and also quotes J.G. Ballard to support this claim:

 'In the past we have always assumed that the external world around us has represented the realm of fantasy and imagination. These roles, it seems to me have been reversed. (Ballard, introduction to the French edition, *Crash* (reprinted in New York: Vintage , 1974), p.5'. (Seltzer (1997): 16)

3.00 Alien Encounters. *Alien* (2002) (5min26secs video, looped) See DVD #2

Exhibited at *Close Encounters of the Other Kind*, at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London (May 2003). For video documentation of the exhibition, see DVD # 6.



Alien (2002) (5min 26secs. video, looped) Video stills.

3.1 The appearance of the other

Three projectors show the same footage, but each has a staggered start so that they do not show the same image at the same time; the viewer does not get the impression that the three images are the same, especially as the footage is looped, but rather that the image itself is one long extended image. The repetitions, both of the three projections and of the loop, are not obvious. The gallery in which I installed them (1) was only twelve feet wide, giving a narrow space for the viewer; the three projected images are butted up against each other to give the impression of a continuous image which touches the floor and ceiling at a height of ten feet (achieved with wide angle lens projectors); the combined three images extend for thirty six feet, almost the whole length of the gallery. The viewer is now in a corridor-like space in which the forest appears to be life-size with only a narrow space for viewing; the spectator is not allowed a distanced viewpoint. The physical experience of this work for the viewer is therefore one of strange disorientation. You enter the room from one end and walk the length of the installation to exit at the other end of the narrow space. The footage has been shot as a long continuous take at a walking pace which almost invites the viewer to keep in time with the image as it rolls across the screen. But, although the pace of the filming has been maintained, I have 'chopped' the image in the editing process into small sections in order to disrupt any continuous possibility of observation for the viewer of the artwork. So what is experienced is a 'staggering' of the image with the erratic appearance and disappearance of the Alien (the only figure in the work), close-up, distant, but also always moving in the same right to left

direction as the camera (the same direction in which you view the work i.e. move through the gallery space).



Alien (2002) (5min 26secs. video, looped) Installation shot.

The sounds of the forest: birds singing, the slight breeze causing the rustling of branches, form the background to the more fore-grounded heavy sound of the crunching of the forest floor underfoot as the camera person moves at a deliberate pace along the forest track. The ambiance / feel of the image in the darkened space of the gallery is of a fairly dim, spooky forest flooded with sunlight; it is very atmospheric. The forest appears to go on forever and the track which the viewer (as camera) walks along lasts literally as long as the artwork is projected (as it is a continuous loop). This scene feels as old as time and as deep as the psyche and as loaded as is the whole of our mythology – pre-historic, before mankind – with no signs of human habitation.

It is a territory outside time and history and serves as the perfect location for the projection of our deepest phantasies. It is a scene which will allow me to progress my investigation into the relationship one has to otherness.



Alien (2002) (5min 26secs. video, looped) Video still.

It is a perfect location for the (erratic) appearance of an other, the Alien (in this case), transported from outer-space, from science fiction. This Alien is obviously a man dressed in an Alien outfit (he is like me but different (2)); yet we are in the realm of representation and we accept that here, in this *real* world (the setting), a simulated (unreal) copy, as *virtual* presence, has occurred. It is a simulation of an imagined being; a copy of an image which belongs to 'virtual reality'. This conjunction of real and virtual, in its easy slippage in this artwork, undermines such simplistic understanding of our postmodern world as 'simulacra', as a lamentable situation (according to

Baudrillard), in which we are unable to distinguish between the real world and its images. (3) But there is no trickery here and though deadly serious it has a certain humour to it. Like the cyborg (of which I will discuss in Section 4.00), the Alien has no origin, it is a copy of an imagined 'being'; it is our imagination made real. (4) Actual and imagined are clearly articulated/identified in this work – but I am keen to examine how the viewer might experience this relation (real/virtual) in the viewing, in this space.

3.2 Nature as fiction, as virtual possibility

Though an actual place, this forest is understood/experienced as far more than a collection of trees; it stands in for primordial 'nature' (already a fiction, according to Donna Haraway), it is a location for ancient myths. It is the dark regions of our psyche; it is already so loaded with its virtual potential. (5) Existing for us more in our childhood consumption of fairy-tales and myths than in our experience, the notion of the forest: its mythical qualities, nevertheless accompanying us. But it is the appearance of the Alien which exposes this relation; the Alien is already understood as a virtual possibility. Here the Alien performs its own virtual power in its actuality. What it *is*, is what it might become (in our imagination but also made real here). It seeks to challenge the proposition that what we might understand as a *real* world is that which precedes simulation; it proposes an experience of this supposed misunderstanding of our world.

I want to propose with this artwork (the viewing of this artwork), that the world which we experience has always been virtual (as that which we might

imagine). I want to propose experience itself as that which debunks the idea of an original. I intend to describe a world without such loss (as forever in mourning for some original bliss) as therefore liberating. To be in a relation to a creative ongoing process, which does not threaten the individual/our subjectivity with disintegration, but proposes recognition of our individual creative potential to become. (6)

This possibility has now become important for my inquiry into the problematic psychoanalytic account of the subject and the relation to the other. As I make new artworks (whilst reading new texts) I explore more enabling possibilities through the experience of the artwork for the spectator.

This artwork, *Alien* (2002), is therefore not a romantic proposition for a lost original natural state into which our imagined longing (for the future /science fiction) can be located. It rather proposes that the real *is* the virtual; and that this is fabulous – it is not problematic – it is even very funny – it is so hilarious – it is affirmative! Nevertheless, the work is both chilling and amusing for the viewer; after all, this is not a ‘real’ event, nor is it a representation, it is an artwork. (7)





Alien (2002) (5min 26secs. video, looped) Sequence; video stills.

3.3 The alien as projection of the self

There is no 'Alien' (and for that matter, no 'woman'); what there is are the possible identities that might be performed; no essence or truth of the self that is either concealed or revealed (8). 'The idea of an original or underlying self or essence is the *effect* of the produced masks and copies. The simulacrum

produces the effect of an original, producing new selves and originals with each performance.’ (Colebrook (2002): 100)

Deleuze’s notion of the simulacra both resists the nostalgia that would want to go back to a time when life was ‘more real’ *and* rejects the idea that we now live in a postmodern world of mere images with no real causes. For Deleuze the simulacrum or image is real, and life is and always has been simulation – a power of production, creation becoming and difference. The idea that all we have are mere representations or constructions of the world seem to posit some real world that is lost or unavailable. Whether we mourn or celebrate the postmodern loss of the real, both models assume that the simulacrum is not real, a mere copy. The simulacrum for Deleuze, however, is neither a recent nor a merely cultural event. The simulacrum is not the loss or abandonment of the real; it *is* the real. A force of life becomes by enhancing its powers of variation and its powers of being affected; it takes on a form other than what it is. It images or projects what it is not (yet). It simulates: becoming other than itself through the very power of a life which is always more than itself. (Colebrook (2002): 101)

I question how this artwork might ‘simulate’ such possibilities to *become* for the viewer – to be other than what it is. Might it disrupt what we might take our reality to be, our selves to be, and reframe them as constructed, as always already located elsewhere – as possibility?

This location (I am speaking here of the actual artwork, *Alien* (2002)) is not the sublime landscape where such occurrences as the encounter with the other might be imagined to take place. It lacks perspective in that it fails to locate you, the viewer, in a central position. It is experienced as flat and continuous in its horizontal movement so that it serves like a horizontally folding screen or mirror with a depth which is at the same time infinite and yet free of a vanishing point; one’s location as a viewer becomes unstable and constantly moving. You, as viewer, are unable to establish a fixed viewing point from which to observe the scene, refusing your desire to stand outside and survey. This is also reinforced by the appearance of the Alien (repeatedly), as it erupts close-up and then distanced, but always along this

horizontal plane. This two-dimensionality produces an intimacy which almost reflects the self (in a mutual attraction?); there is a proximity yet a huge chasm in its 'othersidedness'. (9). It proposes a redefinition of a particular perspective; as the typical 'grand' encounter with the other is literally brought down to earth. The Alien, as the other from outer space, takes on a distinctly territorial level. Elevated notions of greatness and wonder (a masculine vertical economy, linked to notions of the sublime) now descend to surface horizontality; this now becomes a more feminine encounter (especially as described by Irigaray) and is one which I have touched on earlier and indeed will expand upon later in this thesis. A certain intensity created by this proximity is constantly present. It is simultaneously sublime and vulgar, and negotiated by a certain amount of humour. The fear which is projected into the external territory of outer space (the origination of this fantasized Alien other) becomes negotiable on the level of the everyday. The terror of the unknown meets the comfort of the familiar, the home; in this case the forest is the ideal location for such a meeting. It is both mythology and science-fiction located in the same place: past and future collapsed together in an uncanny/uncertain encounter where the virtual and the material embrace in a new kind of proximity.

The desire for a return to nature or an escape into the future collapses here. One is able to be in a proximate relation with the other by collapsing the distance between the self and the source of its fear and its desire. Even though I am going back in a way here with this work to such issues of the unrepresentable, I am seeking a return which upsets the old model of a fixed

subject and enables other possible relations – which move us on; a shift to a *becoming*.

3.4 Re-staging the myth: the alien as thing from outer (and inner) space

The Alien, as the projected anxiety of the threat from 'out there', the non-humanoid stranger from outer space whom we imagine to have more intelligence than ourselves, makes a visitation – appears before us (like the supposed visitation of the Virgin Mary to various adolescent girls in rural Catholic countries). And this being, from Outer Space, makes itself known to us in this location which could be related to our Inner Space, the dark recesses of our minds, the primeval forest where our pre-historic dark 'selves' evolved. We have been invaded by a threatening 'non-self', and we wonder at the encounter.

Cultural encounters have placed us in this world, as subjects. Through such projections otherness is placed outside ourselves, at a safe distance. But I am interested to make other propositions for encounters, which put into discursive form might produce new knowledge, new possible accounts of the self.

To my surprise, when I installed the work, I did not find the work had as much of a humorous effect as I had intended. I had not anticipated this awkward negotiation of the space for the viewer and its strange effect. Many viewers found it disorientating and disturbing yet stayed in the space a long time trying to figure out their experience.

Maybe there is a possible experience here of a phantasmatic projection (also futuristic) of real space; where: 'the virtual promises something different to the actual that it produces, and always contains in it the potential for something other than the actual' (Grosz (2001): 12).

The limits of possible spaces are the limits of possible modes of corporeality: the body's infinite pliability is a measure of the infinite plasticity of the spatiotemporal universe in which it is housed and through which bodies become real, are lived, and have effects. (Grosz (2001): 33)

The narrow space in which to view the work forces the spectator actually to enter the space of the work. The projectors are mounted on one wall and projected onto the opposite, only twelve feet away; it is this space which you are forced to travel along, stepping into it immediately as you enter the room of the installation. Following the image you progress along the space sometimes surprised as you pass in front of the projector so that your own shadow makes its appearance also on the screen. To dodge this possibility you need to stand further back – but then you will need to imagine yourself outside of the work – to see its construction; but there is actually no way to step outside of it – you are literally caught up in it. It comes to you as you go to it; a mutual inclusion.

You are in the space between.

3.5 Encountering the other

The appearance of the Alien in this space (of an anticipated 'monster') might even bring relief; it has finally arrived, at last taken shape and come to meet me; I knew it was lurking; it has always been there; my 'self' has always been

formed in relation to its absent (imagined) presence. Maybe only out of the corner of my eye – a ‘what was that?’ I wait, but then, nothing (so well described by Žižek in ‘Grimaces of the Real or When the Phallus Appears’, *October* magazine, Vol.58 (1989): 45). But here it is, finally; now I have something rather than nothing (10). But this sighting doesn’t actually bring any relief; I cannot really grasp what is happening: its impossibility is disturbing. Faced with what I feared and what I desired to see, it is more likely to bring my very being into question, my status as a desiring person – my desire for that other so that I might know myself; might this now be possible? Will this particular encounter – in this narrow gallery - allow a distance to that distance between us, so that I might be able, at least while I am here in this gallery, to contemplate, even re-assess, this relation? (11) This relation, and how I might rethink it in the experience of the artwork, has become central to this thesis. A practice which disrupts/disturbs/dislodges patriarchal notions of self and other – of difference - is an urgent matter. It is my proposal that the experience of the artwork enables the viewer to have a relation which produces other possible completions.

Both the Alien and the forest are simulations; the space which I inhabit here in this gallery has no danger; I am already once removed. Is this what this artwork (the encounter with this artwork) might allow? My relation to myself, to what precedes me, to what is outside of myself; to that which constitutes me being put into question? How am I to respond to this ‘radical and incalculable alterity, an alterity which defies suppression and annihilation’? (Zylinska (2001): 72) (12)

This other place, this other being in which I am put in close relation; of course, it is humorous – I know it is a man in an Alien suit; this is the space of the artwork and I give myself over to it; it becomes more real than that imagined real. I am put into question. I am both amused and anxious, thrilled and disturbed. I am made vulnerable; I must address this experience (13). Am I able to enjoy this stranger who is oh so familiar? The Alien follows me, precedes me, awaits me, anticipates me as I walk along this path (and so is irreducible to myself), always in a relation to me. What is this distance between us? It seems to be on the side of the dead – yet it lacks the possibility of death itself. It can remind me of my humanity – the fact that it is / who will die. It has always seen me, before I came upon it, before I was able to conjure up its appearance – before it made itself known to me, and myself to myself in that Lacanian mirror (though supported by my mother). Regarding me, before confronting me in this way, it calls me into question. I know it – it is familiar; yet is it now possible to have another relation – one made possible in this encounter here, one which doesn't return me to this old, so familiar relation? Though it remains on the other side and our paths remain parallel, we nevertheless pass over and between - a mutual encounter. A protagonist which brings into question the status of the 'I'. Both what I fear and desire, what I am and am not, what is humorous and what is scary. I am able to respond because it has become embodied in this space; for as long as I remain with this artwork I can have a relation. (14)

The encounter with this impossible other exposes the fact that 'unalienated humanness' has always been empty. It also performs the strategy of appropriation (as mimicking fantasized images of an 'Alien') to repeat and unravel the power structures of dominance and control of that which is deemed 'other'. It is the 'Thing' from outer-space as an intervention into nature. It mimics the representation of an image (the imagined 'alien') of a projection of the fear of the other.

3.6 Becoming alien

I am wondering how this particular encounter might enable and produce interactions or becomings. Might it enable a relation *between*, when one crosses the other, and produce, though temporarily, new becomings?

Becoming is what enables a trait, a line, an orientation, an event to be released from the system, series, organism, or object that may have the effect of transforming the whole, making it no longer function singularly: it is an encounter between bodies that releases something from each and, in the process, releases or makes real a virtuality, a series of enabling and transforming possibilities. Becoming-animal only makes sense insofar as *both* the subject and the animal are transformed in the encounter. (Grosz (2001): p70)

And what of the becoming-alien? It is already something else, something that it is not, and in this mutual 'stalking' (in the viewer's experience of the art work) could it produce an encounter which might transform my own tentative idea of my own subjectivity, to a becoming-other? In this encounter of 'thing', 'you' and 'I', I ask how transformation of what we take things to be might become possible. The distance between 'It' (this 'Thing') and 'I' comes into question: ('I' in the space between the screen and the projection and the alien on the other side of the lens). This proximity and exchange might propose a 'disrespect' of distance to allow other possibilities. In the encounter 'between'

the human and the alien we are both changed; one stalking the other, we come into a relation in this space, this artwork. Yet in this extraordinary proximity, momentary slippages across and between these spaces (in the experience of the artwork) allow a transformation of what we take things to be; how we understand this 'world' which we both inhabit at this moment, together. Transformation, exactly, because the distance slips and crosses – this is not the usual 'correct' distance needed in order to locate ourselves. It is what I propose for the artwork; it is what I imagine it might produce for the viewer. Might this Thing now possibly be understood to be in a different relation to myself, not as other, as binary double of the subject, but rather as that which provides possibilities? It is not that Kantian thing which we can never know but that which needs accommodating as it might enable more positive ongoing possibilities – as creative rather than repressive? (15)

Here, in this artwork I might also encounter an other without absorbing it into my self in some impossible attempt to eradicate difference. In this encounter I become alive to what life is; a mutual encounter which produces me as open to the world. Producing and produced by an encounter with that which I am not, undoing preposterous notions I might have conceived of: self, and other, and of difference. I am attempting with this artwork to make such propositions for the viewer.

3.7 The feminine and the sublime

How might the artwork allow an opening up in such encounters which propose something more enabling than ones which reduce difference to sameness or

which propagate a relation to loss? Joanna Zyliniska argues particularly for a *feminine* sublime – one which works against the masculinist economy of sameness – one which she claims has been silenced by the masculine aesthetic tradition. Maybe this can help me to think through what is made possible with *Alien* (2002). Following the intention of this work and that which is experienced by the viewer, the notion of the sublime becomes worthwhile to investigate. Zyliniska makes various proposals in her book *On Spiders, Cyborgs and Being Scared: the feminine and the sublime*. ‘The notion of the feminine sublime allows me to revisit the sublime’s discursive excess in search for the forms of subjectivity that do not try to reduce difference to sameness or capitalise on loss.’ (Zyliniska (2001): 83) This is an ethical question for Zyliniska. She is concerned with the ethics of the feminine sublime which is

not reduced to the code of moral behaviour, as it produces an ethical situation not only in every singular act of waiting for the other, but also when his or her voice addresses me and I accept (or reject) this call. Here, the sublime springs from uncertainty. The ethics of the feminine sublime can therefore be described as a ‘wandering ethics’, being permanently ‘on-its-way’. Denying capitalisation, the ethical encounter with the other, which has not been underwritten by the promise of success or gain, is marked by both excess and lack. (Zyliniska (2001): 85)

Zyliniska claims that any transaction with the other must recognise the principle of debt and loss. It is a feminine sublime in that it works against conventional notions which alienate the self from the other. The feminine sublime for Zyliniska recognises the other’s distance and in so doing ‘will result in the annulment of the subject’s secure distanced position’. (Zyliniska (2001): 86)

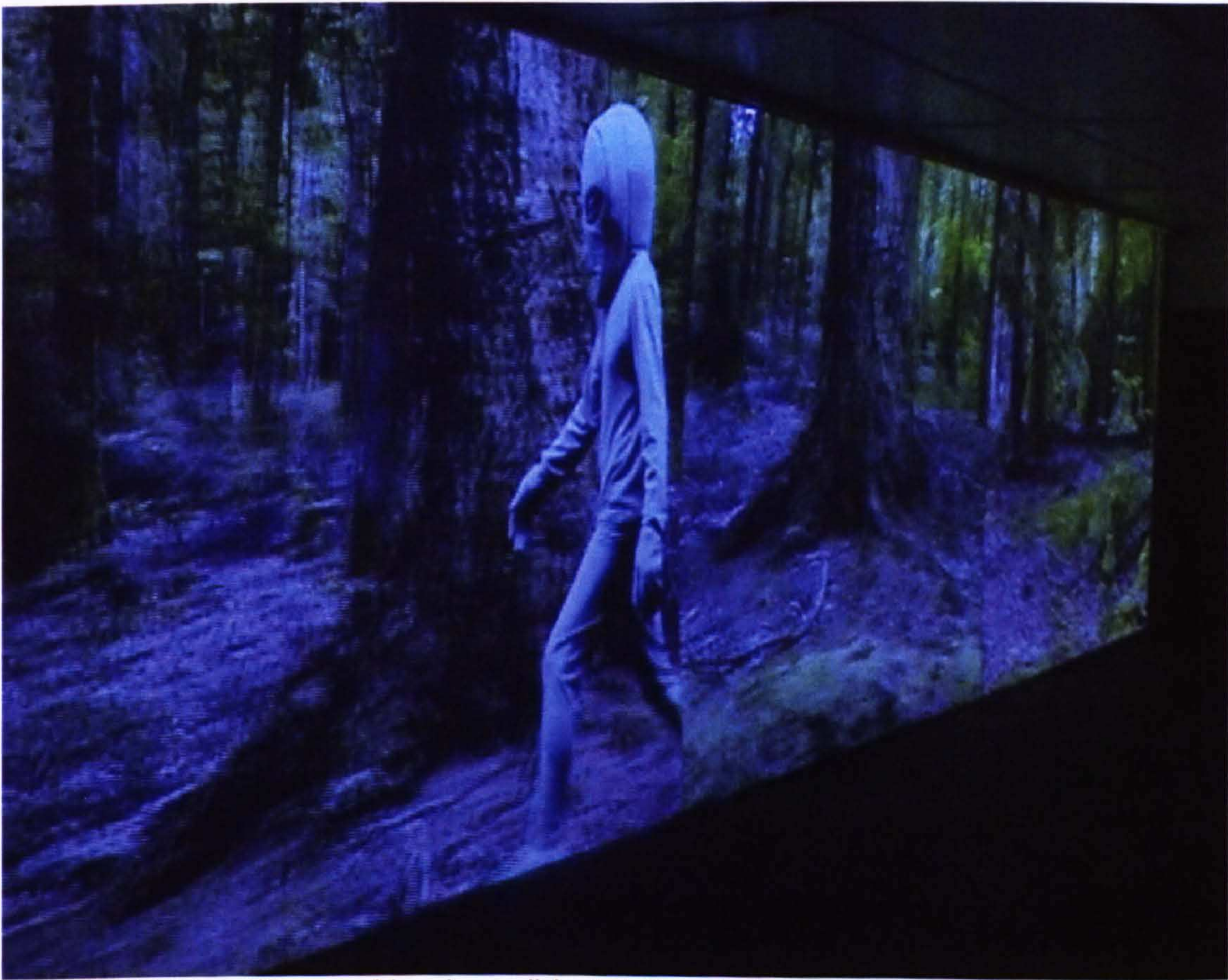
It is this secure distance which collapses in *Alien* (2002). Zyliniska describes a ‘new’ model of subjectivity: ‘the subject is not formed a priori: it is a product of

the event in which it participates. The subject only emerges as a response to the coming of the other, who is assured about his or her being in this very being and not before.' (Zylinska (2001): 86) She argues against the idea of the self formulated by humanist philosophy (that based in notions of a founding moment), to find an idea of the subject informed by feminist thinking which will allow more enabling possibilities. She argues that being interpellated does not guarantee satisfaction, as any encounter has its risks. It also offers the possibility of both terror and bliss. Following Wesling and Slawek's concept of minimal articulation (16) which is 'devoid of the guarantee of a communicative event taking place to the satisfaction of both parties involved', Zylinska asserts that minimal articulation is at work in the feminine sublime as it 'erupts in the articulate discourse and manifests itself in 'corporeal speech' (in its verbal forms such as sexual *jouissance*, hysteria and glossolalia, but also in non-verbal forms, including touch, gesticulation, and dance).' (Zylinska (2001): 88) The 'untameable flow of minimal articulation' poses a threat to the concept of a stable speaking subject.

3.8 The encounter as a continuous relation to my own becoming

The Alien moves in a relation to you as the viewer, the one who is surveying you in this apparently uninhabited natural place. 'He' is on one side of the track – 'you' are on the opposite (literally behind the camera). You occupy the side of the human, he appears on the side of the natural; he is extra-terrestrial from uninhabited time and space, the regions of the psyche – the below/the external/the repressed - of the symbolic. Yet there is a direct relation between us. In the encounter, I anticipate that the artwork will produce a tension

between the two sides. It seems as though the relationship is balanced: between us; there is a mirroring of the self. I move on; sometimes he keeps a pace with me, sometimes he is ahead of me and I overtake. Sometimes he is far away, sometimes close up. But our interaction is continuous. My side has a certain consistency as I move on at the same distance to the forest, on this side of culture, yet the appearance of the Alien is disturbing this safe distance which I seek to maintain. His appearance is unpredictable, and the forest itself stutters and chops – only my pace, the pace of my life continues as I continue as the viewer of this artwork.



Alien (2002) (5min 26secs. video, looped) Installation shot

The viewer can walk against this flow, in this narrow gallery – back towards the entrance door; maybe this adds to the unsettling experience of time and

space. I have filmed this footage with the camera sitting on my shoulder at a 90-degrees angle to my body; it is as though I am walking straight ahead but looking over my shoulder to the right. I keep on walking at a steady pace along a stretch of forest which is about 100 yards long. I film in short sections; each time I reposition my Alien, sometimes he is still, sometimes ahead of me, sometimes I ask him to catch up with me and overtake. Though the camera keeps its pace, I am not in the usual fixed seat provided for the viewer in the cinema. Here, as viewer of this artwork, I am conscious of my own moving body: I can remain still and let the movement pass in front of me, I can walk alongside, keeping pace *with* the camera; I can walk back against the flow, against the direction dictated to me. I notice that viewers play with this pacing; most people move slowly along waiting, I presume, for the Alien – to know what he might do, when he will appear or disappear. The viewer's body becomes an instrument for viewing. They become an active participant in this artwork - more active than the usual passive space of cinematic viewing. Here time and movement collapse into each other. As I move, I am in a continuous relation to my own becoming. No possible stability is offered nor is possible to experience.

My usual perception of time is located and interested. The past is what I recall in order to anticipate my future. From this position one recalls or projects; it is time itself which, located in the present, connects movements into a perceived whole. And, so, in this work the camera creates another movement across another moving body, so that it is not possible to think of time as connections in this usual linear route (past, present, future). I have described already how

the viewer might occupy the space of this installation. I am disorientated, as my past, present and future collapse into the now. Cuts and multiple viewpoints do their work. (17)



Alien (2002) (5min 26secs. video, looped) Installation shot.

I have cut the filmed footage into very short sections, editing it together so that the image is constantly 'chopping'; as it is filmed at the same pace, the momentum continues steadily but the image 'jumps' every few seconds or so. I had intended to keep up a kind of dislodging for the viewer of the work which would add to the effect of the unpredictable appearance and disappearance of the Alien and destabilise any kind of static viewpoint and hierarchical positioning. Any stable anticipated action now breaks up into a heterogeneity of time and space. The image is set in motion so as to dislodge what we might

pre-suppose and what we might think we know. Absence, presence, near and far, life and death become ongoing. It has been my intention to elaborate through the editing of the image this disordering of the image, of the reading of the image, of the relation to it; to derange our ordered schemas, to make a discord in our positioning: to upset our sense of our selves.

I had not intended, though, to show this video in this way. It was the space itself which suggested it to me – the 36 x 12 foot room (somewhat like a corridor). I realised that by projecting the image from floor to ceiling and by repeating the image three times (with three projectors lined up seamlessly), I could extend the intended endlessness of the ongoing nature of the image. And it worked! The repetition and the close proximity produced for the viewer continued this dislodging effect, and intensified the 'stuttering' of the image. Any rhythm or logic of the unfolding image is dislodged and representation as a fixing of meaning becomes de-stabilized. The image is in motion (the camera is moving right to left at a steady walking pace), yet it doesn't go anywhere – you (as viewer) are propelled along (from right to left), but the image breaks (stutters) and shifts in time; it is discontinuous. A 'has been' and a 'going to be' become scrambled together into a 'now' (the moment of viewing) so that we literally don't get anywhere and so becomes, almost, a non-time. Can the viewer now be liberated from the image as an actuality of his experience and so freed to make his own sense of the world?



Alien (2002) (5min 26secs. video, looped) Video stills.

Our usual relation to the world as a seeing from our particular interested and embodied perspective comes into question; our relation to ‘life’ becomes disrupted. We are now in a flow outside our usual ordering. Deleuze claims this to be the work of the artwork, with *affect* as a sensibility *not* organised into meaning; affect is to interrupt synthesis and order. I am concerned to consider how the artwork can allow us to step outside of our usual organising point of view in order to experience the chaos of singularities: not to lead to a generalising of experience, but rather to what Deleuze calls the Universal. It is what I intend for the experience in the space of this artwork *Alien (2002)*. The Universal ‘strives to discern what makes something specifically what it is’.

3.9 Artifactuation. Nature as transformative, as challenging the limits of culture, where boundaries collapse.

This installation does not propose that there is a something in excess of the here and now: an eruption of an unknowable other, a proposal to excite and entertain and thrill like that proposed by such projects as *The Blair Witch Project*. This artificial Alien *is* reality and works against such Hollywood notions and the attempt to convince the audience of something authentic. Such notions of desire become exposed here; the virtual *is* the real. Deleuze along with such thinkers as Donna Haraway present a different approach to

notions of subjectivity which are not based in the loss of an idyllic past. Their philosophy as such is therefore anti-foundationalist, anti-humanist.

Haraway, as a primatologist and a feminist, passionately advocates a relationship to nature which undoes that of (patriarchal and Western notions of) reification and possession. (18)

We must find another relationship to nature besides reification, possession, appropriation and nostalgia. No longer able to sustain the fictions of being either subjects or objects, all the partners in the potent conversations that constitute nature must find a new ground for making meaning together (Haraway (2004): 126)

This forest and this 'Alien' produce an interface which might allow a mediation of exchanges; in order to become an 'SF world called elsewhere'. (Haraway (2004): 70) (19) This is 'a place composed from interference patterns' undoing 'replication, reflection, or reproduction.' (Haraway (2004): 70) Such familiar sites of forest and Alien then invite a reading of the essential yet refuse such simplistic reflections to become an issue of what Haraway proposes for artifactuation to propose something quite other, something which operates outside of grounding origins and futuristic myths. This 'artifactualism' means, for Haraway, the possibility of nature for us as '*made*, as both fiction and fact'. It is a proposition which does not support a post-modern proposition that the world is in fact denatured and reproduced as copies, where 'transcendental naturalism' reproduces a world as sameness.

So, nature is not a physical place, to which one can go, nor a treasure to fence in or bank, nor an essence to be saved or violated. Nature is not hidden and so does not need to be unveiled. Nature is not a text to be read in the codes of mathematics and biomedicine. It is not the "other" who offers origin, replenishment, and service. Neither mother, nurse, nor slave, nature not matrix, resource, nor tool for the reproduction of man. (Haraway (2004): 65)

Maybe 'nature' can be understood as an idea which is open to that which might transform (20). The Alien is 'unnatural' – from outside of nature – from outer-space, not of this world, it is non-human (not like us), it does not belong here. Yet it is precisely in such open sites as this forest (when understood as open, as in-between) that it might occur. Here it might begin to challenge the limits of culture – that which produces its excess. Here it might undo such stable categories and boundaries of space, time and of history; of inside and outside, of here and there, of body and psyche.

This 'scene', this sighting of the Alien in the primordial setting, is not an assertion of history and myth of some Jungian archetype. Žižek warns of the stupidity of the reading of the appearance of the 'monster' for what it might be taken to mean; for him the important question is how this very space (where the monster appears) is constituted, which is also what this work has intended to propose. (21) I question how this 'sighting' then might allow for a rethinking of ourselves situated in relation to a history, ...it is a history that is 'geological' as well as 'genealogical'. (22) In *Alien* (2002) I would like to propose what Deleuze would describe as a possibility of becoming other; a possibility of an opening to the life that passes through us and become one with the flow of life and able to shift from a fixed separate viewpoint.

Alien (2002) is one of the three video works which I exhibited at Trinity Buoy Wharf as an installation entitled *Close Encounters of An Other Kind*. I had been working on three pieces simultaneously in order to explore the viewing space: how one might encounter otherness and how this relation might enable

a re-thinking of the power relations which constitute the self. The next two chapters explore the other two works in this exhibition.

Notes

1. See plan of Trinity Buoy Wharf, Appendix #2.
2. Like Levinas's stranger who is both, paradoxically, 'like me but different'. (Levinas 1980)
3. Baudrillard proposed the lamentable postmodern culture as a loss of the real.
4. It undermines Baudrillard's oppositional proposition for the actual and the virtual and proposes that reality is always already actual-virtual. This actual scene has been produced out of virtual possibilities.
5. Haraway says that she wants to write natural history 'to see if some other stories are possible, ones not premised on the divide between nature and culture, armed cherubims, and heroic quests for secrets of life and secrets of death.' (Haraway (2004): 127)

So nature is not just a physical place to which one can go, nor a treasure to fence in or bank, nor an essence to be saved or violated. Nature is not hidden and so does not need to be unveiled. Nature is not a text to be read in the codes of mathematics and biomedicine. It is not the Other who offers origin, replenishment and service. Neither mother, nurse, lover, nor slave, nature is not matrix, resource, mirror, nor tool for the reproduction of that odd, ethnocentric, phallogocentric, putatively universal being called Man. Nor for his euphemistically named surrogate, the "human." (Haraway (2004): 126)

6. This is Deleuze's proposal for 'becoming' and it opposes the fantasy of a lost original state of bliss and a longing to return to it. (Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 232)
7. I read that Deleuze proposes that artworks are not the copy of the actual world, but rather have the possibility of extending the virtual tendencies of the given world (Deleuze 1994). The simulacrum, for Deleuze, is a thing's power to become other and produce fake images of itself; this is to do away with the notion of an original (Deleuze 1994).
8. There are links here with my intentions for my earlier video *Footnotes* (2000).
9. Like Lacan's 'recto & verso' as the two sides of the same sheet of paper; the screen here might also be understood in this way - as this space.
10. 'The arrival of the other evokes Burkean *horror vacui*, the terror of void and death, a glimpse of both singularity and mortality.' (Zylinska (2001): 72)
11. 'A calling into question of the same [...] is brought about by the other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and to my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity as ethics.' (Levinas (1980): 43)
12. Joanna Zylinska is arguing for a possible *feminine* sublime; an encounter which produces quite a different relation to ideas of the self.
13. Alterity of the other: Levinas.

14. Irigaray extends this to the sexuate other which enables this encounter as a body-to-body proximity and where the other is not subjugated or appropriated.

15. (Grosz (2001): 169) turns to Darwin rather than Descartes to provide a description of the thing as positive rather than alienating: 'The thing, matter already configured, generates invention, the assessment of means and ends, and thus enables practice. The thing poses questions to us, questions about our needs and desires - it also functions as a *promise*, as that which, in the future, in retrospect, yields a destination or effect, another thing.'

16. Wesling and Slawek 1995.

17. Deleuze suggests that it is movement in the image which displaces us from our usual point of view.

18. Haraway then goes on to specify what it *is*: 'a commonplace', where we turn 'to order our discourse, to compose our memory' (Haraway (2004): 65); it is a place in which we might 'rebuild public culture'. She proposes (in the essay 'A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others') to trope nature 'through a relentless artifactualism.' (Haraway (2004): 65)

19. Haraway uses the term 'SF' to stand for a whole string of issues: science fiction, speculative futures, science fantasy, speculative fiction.

20. Elizabeth Grosz, in *Architecture from the Outside*, describes the 'in-between' as 'strange place' which is open to the future. She links it to the natural: 'The natural must be understood as fundamentally open to history, to transformation' or to becoming, as open as culture, as innovative, temporal, and historical as the purview of social, psychical, and cultural life.' (Grosz (2001): 97)

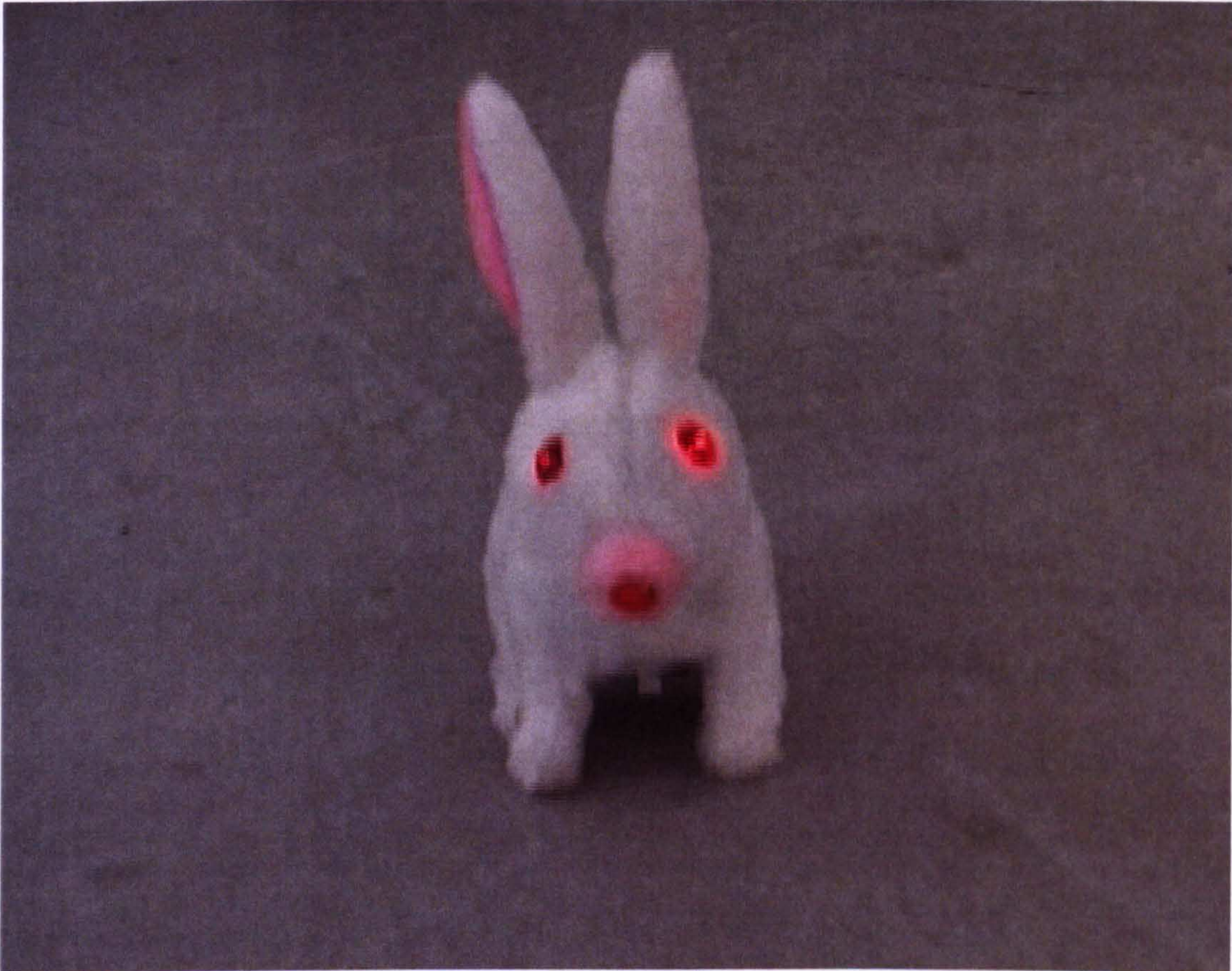
21. 'Grimaces of the Real or When the Phallus Appears' in *October* magazine, vol. 58 (1989): 45.

22. 'In geneology [Deleuze] traced the improbable birth of events; the political idea of 'man', for example, is the result of reducing tyrannical images of the despot or ruler to the bourgeois image of the universal citizen. In geology he shows how life and time become in a multiplicity of layers: genetic, chemical, geological and cultural events all produce different strata or 'plateaus' of life. There is no single history within which all life will be ordered.' (Colebrook (2002): 58)

4.00 Animal Encounters

4.1 *The Rabbit*. *Rabbit* (2003) (7 min. 5secs video, looped) See DVD # 3

Exhibited at *Close Encounters of the Other Kind*, at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London, May 2003. For video documentation of the exhibition see DVD # 6.

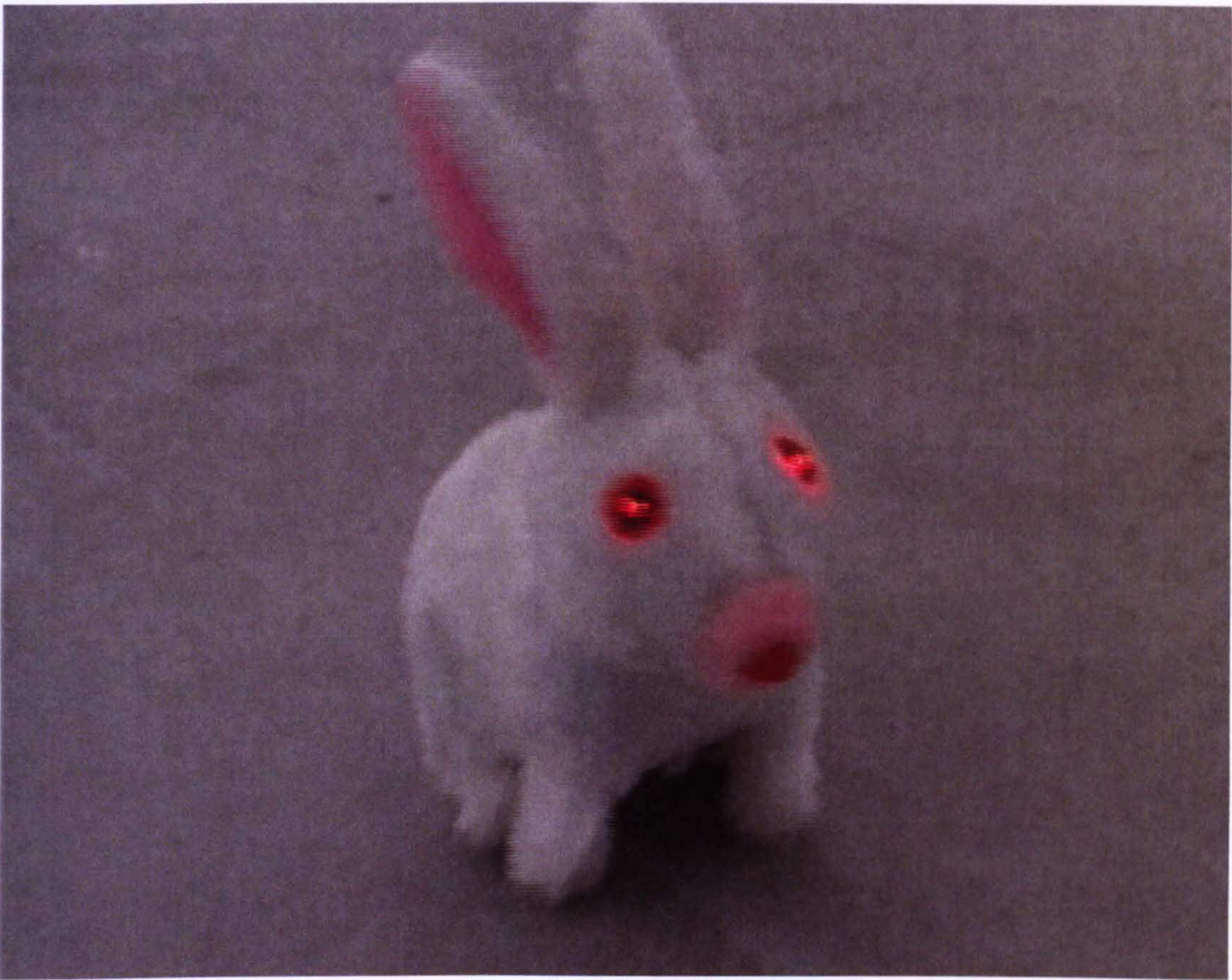


Rabbit (2003) (7min. 5secs. video, looped) Video still.

I bought this mechanical Rabbit from a street vendor in Venice. I had just shot the *Alien* (2002) video and was still contemplating the notion of the 'eruption' of the 'monster' into the everyday (especially as discussed by Žižek in 'Grimaces of the Real' *October* magazine, vol. 58 (1989): 45). Here was another possibility to explore such encounters, but, following Žižek, I am not only concerned with its otherness or its appearance – but also how this very

space in which it appears is constituted. I made this video, which again explores an encounter for the viewer of the work.

The video is played on a black 24-inch monitor placed on the floor of the gallery. It is one of the three videos which I installed in my exhibition *Close Encounters of the Other Kind* (alongside *Alien (2002)* and *Out of the Blue* – see Appendix #2 for exhibition plan). I had intended to show it large – projected as 8 x 10 feet onto the wall in a separate small room next to the space where I project the *Alien (2002)* video (described in the previous section). I realize that at this size it competes too much with the other installations in the show; on the monitor it has its own particular quality. I also have to consider (in installing this show) the sound; the noise of the whining mechanism and the repetitive aggressive 'barking' which the rabbit emits every ten seconds is very demanding. With the monitor I can provide headphones and am delighted to find that a more intimate and intense relationship is set up for the viewer. The monitor is placed on the floor in the darkened entrance to the gallery, which is a largish room. The screen faces away from the door so that the viewer has no long shot of the image. Placed on the floor, the image has the same viewing relation to the shooting of the video; the floor of the gallery and the floor in the image are the same: I shot the video in this space. The rabbit is now an approximate real life size on the screen. I intend there to be a feeling of intensity in the encounter with this work.



Rabbit (2003) (7min. 5secs. video, looped) Video still.

This Rabbit, this other, is both with us and against us. It is both cute and monstrous; pleasurable and repellent. It is nature (the wild), tamed as cute soft toy. This ‘beast’ (as operating in this encounter as an artwork) poses questions for possible anthropomorphic and sentimental encounters of the human and the animal; here is a question of a refusal of the usual nature/culture, human/animal binaries. As animal it is a reminder of the limits of human understanding with its connections to our origins, as nature. Yet it is already somewhat on the side of the domestic and the mythological: it is white, it could be a pet, it appears in magic tricks – out of nowhere; it is to some extent already of our human world – cuddly – it is even a toy!

4.2 Machinic couplings

This Rabbit's animality already has another coupling: with the machine, and so already escapes the Oedipal trap of filiation. It has no father (unlike Frankenstein) and eschews an anthropocentric identification and any narcissism. It is outside of filiation – it has other (mechanical) alliances which is why it is appropriate to explore for this research project. Though sexually voracious (as brown bunny) this animal-toy-machine, has no hereditary production; its 'penis' is a switch – the power which activates it, it is robotic; as hybrid it is even sterile. Yet it produces a dynamic possibility in its multiplicity. It is outside of usual modes of conduct (even while ruled by the limits of machinization), a thing on the borderline; it is anomalous: machine-animal-pet-toy-monster.

And so as a 'thing' it offers to explore territories which have become central to this research project. I bought it for the properties it presents for exploration. I make an artwork as a simple encounter which might allow these potentials to be experienced by the viewer and to be brought into a relation with it. I now write about the artwork for what this experience might allow to be considered in relation to my research questions.

This white cuddly toy is a mechanical monster; with red flashing eyes and thumping sharp jerking leaps it pursues the camera in a close encounter as we (camera/viewer) back away from it. It comes on, relentlessly. I have filmed it in a continuous take, backing away yet keeping it in full frame; I anticipate its direction, it dictates the filming. It does not stop, it is more 'lively' than us – it

will continue for as long as you can endure to watch it. It is both playful and aggressive/menacing, threatening yet humorous, repellent and pleasurable, all at the same time. It does not move from one to the other – it is always already between the categories; it is a crossing of oppositions. It is an uncanny coupling which proposes an undoing of categories and identities. Usual dualisms of nature and culture, human and animal, human and machine, are not enough, nor even relevant; there is an excess here which reminds us of the limits of understanding. This is not about the ongoing oppositions of man, animal and machine; it proposes, rather, an undoing of such categories as an awkward conjunction of them all.



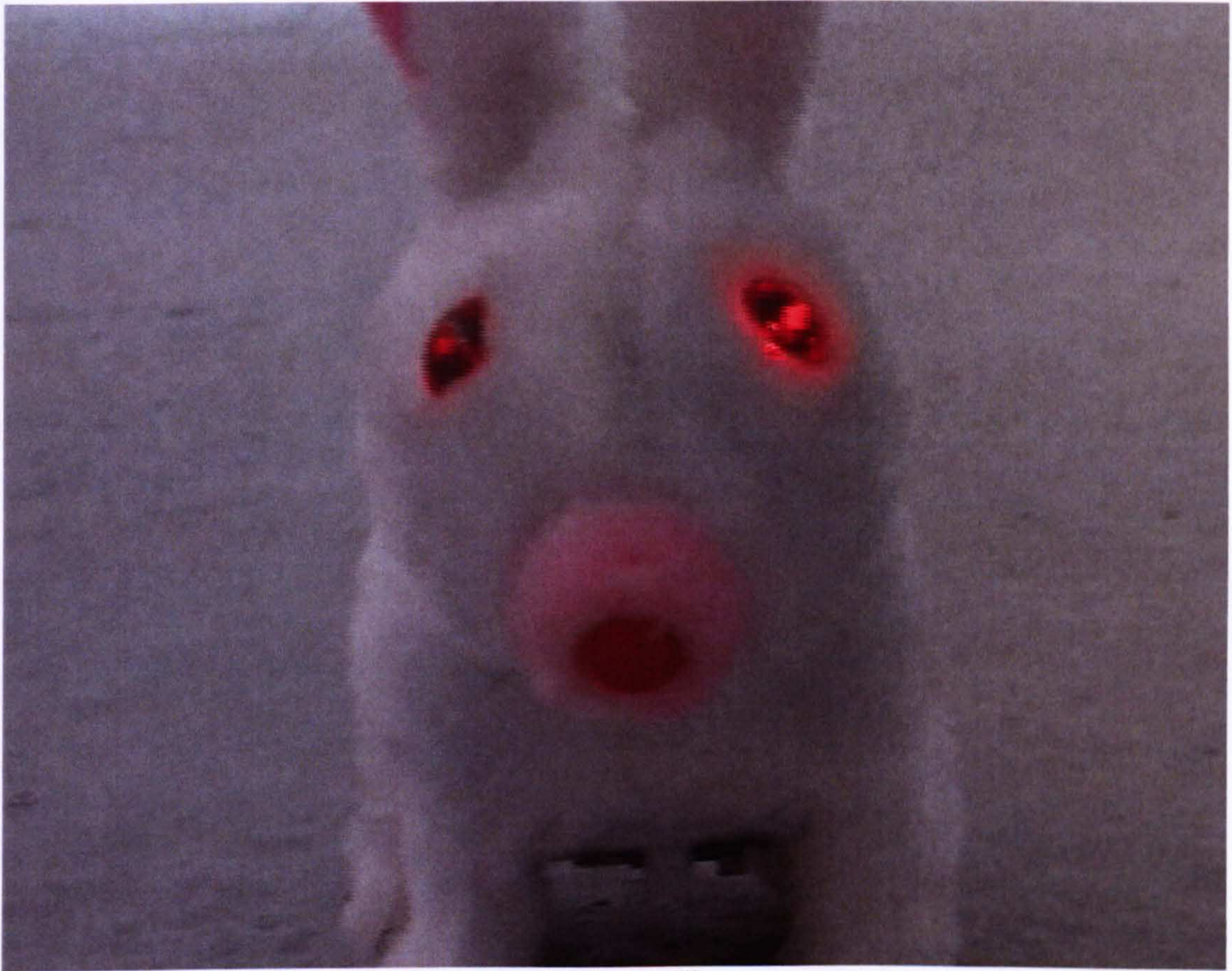
Rabbit (2003) (7min. 5secs. video, looped) Video sequence.

This encounter is a kind of confrontation; this monstrous taxidermic rabbit lopes noisily and frantically, relentlessly, on towards the retreating camera. This is an insistent ongoing confrontation; the footage has been shot in this same space – the space of viewing – an industrial non-space (not that of nature). It places me, the viewer, in an equal space with the ‘beast’ so that categories become problematised. Nothing can be resolved here; the encounter remains perplexing and unsettling.

It is when this beast is animated in the artwork that its ‘becoming’ becomes; it is not what it might suggest, but how it works on you, how an alliance is made with it – in the process of a becoming. I am in a relation of exchange, forced out of my own self-concern (where the animal would be merely an other of myself) by the perplexity of the encounter. There is a crossing over in the constant movement – in the same space; there is a going no-where, only an affective, insistent, ongoing relation between it and the viewer. It proposes, as an artwork, to produce a non-hierarchical relation ‘between’.

As well as the pounding of the rabbit’s ‘paws’ on the concrete floor and the whirring of the mechanical parts that propel it, the rabbit emits an astonishingly aggressive ‘bark’; every five seconds or so the rabbit stops and barks. At you, for you, against you? Rabbits are silent creatures (though known to ‘scream’ when in terror); this Rabbit’s ‘voice’ is mechanical and menacing – a dehumanized noise which adds to the impossibility of apportioning meaning. It also adds to its monstrosity. Its ‘voice’ as both machine and animal takes it outside of language (associated with the

gendered body), a mode of production of the self. This 'voice' is already hybrid; in its sonority it is already something else.



Rabbit (2003) (7min. 5secs. video, looped) Video still.

Yet perhaps the most confrontational aspect of this beast are its red demonic eyes. As albino they would of course be red. In its mechanization they rhythmically flash, like the flashing of danger lights, as warning systems: urgent, alarming. They follow the rhythm of its pounding movements yet continue when the rabbit stops momentarily to bark. The flashing red and the barking are emitted in rhythm to confront and menace.

4.3 Cyborgian hybridization

This monster (1), this machinical rabbit, because it is so familiar (as rabbit), has implications for 'us' humans. In this artwork the usual, expected image (as cute, cuddly) becomes out of place. It has a strange relation to us, through the camera; in pursuit, confusing the boundary of who is in control: you as human, or this rabbit as machine. Pursuing us, in order to take revenge? Pursuing us, in order that we may not remain in the position of control? Pursuing us, in order that we may rethink the categories (which it in its own becoming has already been undone) of difference and the boundaries that we erect in order to perpetuate the myth of domination and control over our worlds which we are in constant horror of losing? To challenge 'the informatics of domination'? (Haraway (2004): 38)

The Rabbit here, as an uncanny coupling, is also a cyborg (2). As such it re-works the hierarchies of nature/culture, man/machine to propose that this crossing over *is* the state of being human – that this element is an intrinsic part of our understanding of the world. It is not dependant on the plot of an original (imagined) unity; it is without innocence. Maybe that is why I have chosen to film it coming at you, reversing the old 'natural' tale: 'Run Rabbit, run...'; but not *from* me, but here *as* and *at* me. As cyborg it runs forever, it cannot be caught and tamed; it is outside of this relation. As machine it has neither subjectivity nor organising centre; it is what it is and what it does.

The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation. (Haraway (1989b): 174)

The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, post-modern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code. (Haraway (2004): 23)

The encounter with the cyborg raises questions and offers new possibilities of sexualisation and embodiment. Unproblematic hybrids (3) can affirm a separation of categories, but the cyborg which can be 'seen as figuring the uncertain and performative character of identity' (Zylinska (2001): 128) might challenge fixed notions of the self, the problematic boundedness of the human, and therefore 'queer' the process of identification. Donna Haraway's proposition for the cyborg (4) is not concerned primarily though with how we encounter the cyborg but rather with what its essence might be. 'The cyborg is a condensed image of imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation.' (Haraway (1989b): 174) Haraway argues for a *pleasurable* confusion of the boundaries which the cyborg presents us with. She is not concerned to perpetuate any post-modernist utopia which is without gender, ('The cyborg incarnation is outside salvation history' (Haraway (2004): 8)) but rather argues for the cyborg as a creature 'in a post-gender world.' (ibid: 9) The cyborg therefore presents an anti-humanist, anti-foundationalist proposition.

The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between the human and animal is transgressed. Far from signalling a walling off of people from other living beings, *cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling.* (Haraway (1989b): 76)

The oppositions which the cyborg represents become transgressed and fused, to offer (political) possibilities for a rethinking of the self and our relation to our world. These possibilities then are not to perpetuate myths of wholeness and a longing for lost innocence but rather to subvert them. This can take place/effect through couplings which subvert this logic; couplings

which confuse and resist the structure of desire which produce such hierarchical, dualistic constructions of identity:

This is why cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine. (Haraway (2004): 34)

These 'new' couplings do not produce another self, rather, they serve to dislodge and free up traditional western lines of thinking of and producing such selves. (5)

The rabbit, as an uncomplicated sign, falls all too easily into the beloved other whom I might possess – as sex object: bunny girl, or as soft toy or pet – both comforting and safeguarding hierarchical constructions of identities. As menacing hybrid, this Rabbit – this cyborgian beast, animated in this artwork, has another structure: it is not imaginary, but virtual (the phantasized made actual), it is the borderline 'between'; it is a dynamic position. It is generated, as are other cyborgs, 'by the collapse into each other of the technical, organic, mythic, textual, and political.' (Haraway (2004): 112) And it is here to remind us of our mistaken longings and to propose other possibilities. It is a feminist project.

So the Rabbit (2003) enables an exploration of this dynamic territory; but this is not about articulating a possible identity as 'between'. What it offers are possibilities for *alliances* in which to traverse the other. This is not a dualistic model – not to be in a hierarchical relation with the human – but a possible oscillation between. As an idea and as an image I find that this work has these possibilities – these potentials, but I am not happy with the resulting

finished artwork. The work fails for me to fully explore what I am keen to develop overall in this research project. I find that this artwork does not make this enabling shift for the viewer. The *Alien* (2002) and *Out of the Blue* (which I consider in the next section) installations have been much more successful in enabling a more productive encounter for the viewer of the works. The *Rabbit* (2003) – though creating an image which is constantly moving - does not enable a fluidity, a movement ‘between’, which might be generative of other possible alliances which I have been attempting to explore here. For me it remains static; it remains separate from me – in a confrontational relation to the viewer in the actual space of viewing. It remains on its side – I on mine. The movement does not generate another kind of movement (psychic, emotive); a shift which I am intent on exploring. It has a certain static quality. I decide not to rework this artwork but to move on. I have already plans for my next work which starts with a diagram of spaces (*Love Stories*). But before this I will remain with the animal and explore Lucy Gunning's *Horse Impressionists* which for me, *does* allow a becoming; it successfully forms these fluid alliances. It also allows me to re-focus on my initial intentions for this research.

I began this thesis with a particular possibility for the woman:

There is, in an initial phase , perhaps only one “path”, the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of mimicry. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means always to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. (Irigaray (1985a): 76)

I discussed this possibility in relation to Jemima Stehli's response to Alan Jones' work in section one of this thesis. Feminist theory has proposed hysteria as a response to the patriarchal order which defines woman as 'not-

all': miming the feminine role ascribed to her. While performative strategies are enabling I am more interested to pursue the possibility of exploring Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becoming' as productive and creative rather than regressive or an aberration.

Deleuze and Guattari's becoming can never be a matter of mimicry:

Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, "appearing," "being," "equalling," or "producing." (Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 239)

They insist on the distinction between imitation and becoming yet describe where imitation might turn into a becoming or where it may fail as it becomes disrupted, or a speed misjudged, so that it returns to its symbolic analogy (Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 259). In my ongoing research for the possibilities for the female subject, I am concerned to consider now how, in the process of becoming-animal, there might also be a possibility for the woman of her being mistakenly understood/interpreted as falling back into the space of the void, of her 'not-all' – to re-present a mere masquerade of her own femininity? (6)

4.4 *The Horse*. Lucy Gunning's *Horse Impressionists* (1994)



Lucy Gunning, *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). Video still.

Though Lucy Gunning has named her video *The Horse Impressionists* (1994), it is not a work which I experience as merely a series of clever impersonations of the horse by the five women who have been selected to be filmed for this work. There is no danger for me here of experiencing a mere mimetic identification. I knew when I first saw it that this artwork was extremely powerful in its affect to move and disturb the viewer. (7) This is not a strategy of mimetic enactment which threatens the performance of femininity as hysterical collapse. For me, this artwork enacts a becoming as a practice which opens up new possibilities for subjectivity. It sweeps us up and takes us away from a traumatic repetition of ourselves, it is thrilling to watch; it is transformative.

'Becoming-animal' for Deleuze and Guattari is not about the replication of an image (putting on of the animal suit in an impersonation of the animal); it is, rather, a creative response, a feeling for the perceived image as it is encountered. I cannot become that which I am not, but through a feeling for that other, I might respond to, rather than literally copy it. There is far more going on in Gunning's work than merely watching clever horse impersonations. Though the impersonation brings to mind an 'original' horse which hovers like a ghostly absence here, we are transfixed by the extraordinary transformation of the woman as a response to something outside herself, more than herself. For me, as the viewer, I become witness to a becoming-animal becoming-woman. In the act of watching I too am drawn along this 'line-of-flight', transformed in the moments of its becoming. It is also evident in several of the women's performances that their becoming is evident to themselves; three of the five impressionists repeatedly look into the camera lens, registering an awareness of their performance, of the pleasure of their becoming.

4.5 Becoming Horse

But the becoming-horse, doesn't stop at the woman's impression of the horse, it happens between the impressionist and the camera. Her becoming-horse is a becoming-film becoming-viewer: the woman makes her performance for the artist (Lucy Gunning), for her hand-held camera; there is a tension between them, between the filming – the film rolling and the performance which paces the movement, the dynamic, of the impression of the horse. The becoming of

the woman is in the moment of the astonishing connections when she becomes one with the horse and the camera. Gunning is clever in her editing – she retains the footage which records these moments of the performance: the before of the action where the Impressionist begins to concentrate and form the idea of the horse in her head. In this way Gunning is able to capture the process of the horse materialising (as image and sound) in the performer's mind. Then begins the 'becoming' - the moment when the Impressionist takes on the image - to become the horse which produces the 'becoming-intense' for those few minutes; a becoming-other than herself; the woman as the horse; her becoming-horse, as she rides the horse that she becomes. This is the extraordinary power of this piece of work – we witness the whole process of the woman's becoming-horse. It is not a matter of her ability to describe the horse for us. We experience an assemblage of horsiness without the image of the animal to convey it; we experience the horse and the woman way in excess of its image. We see her becoming, the woman and the horse as they make and re-make each other into something else. It is not the woman acting/imitating the horse; we are swept away from meaning and this is truly moving. It is the most powerful thing a human being can do – transform themselves through the power of their creative potential, to produce a crossing-over / intersecting / encountering, momentarily, that which they are not. This is the power of life; to be able to encounter the other and change the self – (though it is only momentary). We too as viewer become transported to something of a between of the human and the animal – a thrilling crossing over of the one and the other, a virtual power actualised momentarily in the performance – in the power of the performance (of this artwork) to affect me,

transport me, the viewer. We are not viewing a performance of a woman becoming what the horse *is*, this artwork is not about watching a woman behaving *like* a horse (how hilarious and of course ridiculous that might be – how *hysterical*). (8)

There are five quite different assemblages of horse-woman. The first is filmed full body-length in a long white raincoat as she rides the ‘horse’ which she also becomes. She makes her body into an assemblage of horsiness: first she makes her body into a prancing, then she conjures hooves rearing above her head; then, gaining speed, off she begins to trot, emitting extraordinary whinnying sounds. Tension, concentration, prancing, head thrown back, keeping moving, keeping control. Differing speeds and intensities; gathering tensions; lines-of-flight. Gunning films her in a park; the feel of the outdoors, of the grass, of the sky. She films her full-length – elegant long body in long white raincoat, shaking her head, loosening her hair as the wild noises erupt from her throat; then close-up of her face, from below, with the sky as background. The becoming of the inside of the body to the outside.



Lucy Gunning, *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). Video stills; sequence.

4.6 The deterritorialization of the voice

The two impressionists who concentrate their performance on the voice are filmed close-up on their faces. Both maintain eye-contact with the camera, with Gunning and with us as viewers. Both emit long excessive neighing/whinnying; noises of an agitated, excited horse, wild and powerful. One woman cups her hands around her mouth, pressing the sides of her nose. The noise is not just the vocal chords; it is the sinuses, the inside of the mouth, the throat, the lungs, and the body – a becoming-sonorous. The face, the body, is now not about speech, about language, about articulation, about interpretation, about representation; it becomes-excess, becomes-affect, becomes-other than. The voice here is experienced as outside of speech acts; like the scream, the sob, the laugh, the wail, they are eruptions that convey more than language. This is a voice resistant to meaning, that which is inexpressible in language. A deterritorialization of the voice; no longer of her body or of the horse but of the line of becoming between them. (9)



Lucy Gunning, *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). Video still.

The girl in the tunnel emitting the most excessive whinnying remains still for the camera; the sound she produces is too strong for anything else. Both she and the camera are transfixed and routed to the spot as the noise echoes and reverberates in the tunnel. As she stops she laughs into the camera –

overcome with the power of her becoming-horse. She repeats it again and again, more and more excessive – transported along the moving sound, carried away while rooted to the spot. It is so powerful she looks embarrassed, even shocked. The camera lingers on her for a long time as she has finished; she smiles self-consciously at the camera. Gunning is in this work as much as the impressionist; the hand-held camera – following, coaxing, affirming and recording the encounter, the crossing-over. Artist and camera become artwork. Becoming-camera, becoming-artist, becoming-viewer. This is the possibility for practice, for the work of the artwork, which this research is seeking to explore. Gunning's work is firmly rooted in questions of identity and sexuality.



Lucy Gunning, *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). Video stills.

The next impressionist does not engage with the camera but seems absorbed in her own efforts of concentration. As her impression/performance begins she paces up and down emitting her horse noises through closed lips. Gathering speed she moves in and out of frame; the camera remains and waits and listens – too intense for it to follow her body – too much for us to see; too much emotion; too much affect. She emits incredible high-pitched whinnying off screen and then moves into frame – head held high, caught up with the horse, hands on hips, body erect, elegant, controlled, in motion. And

then again, the close-up of her head, sky as background for a beautiful sound, a crossing of the animal and the human voice; to witness her becoming-horse. Zones of intensity and proximity; our crossing over with her becoming-horse, our becoming-viewer, our becoming-woman. We too enter this other zone, outside of representation, momentarily transported through a crossing over with this other.

Then the horse's voice: Zones of intensity and proximity again. X. Becoming-horse.



Lucy Gunning, *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). Video stills.

Then, the fifth impressionist with black leather boots and jacket, neb cap; prancing, holding imaginary reins and crop. Trotting, controlling this frisky horse, emitting horsey sounds. The click of the tongue inside the mouth – our communicative sound when we meet a horse or mount her and signal her to move on. Shifting in the saddle, and then moving off, some slow movements, tension, prancing. Loses it, laughs to camera. Concentrates. Starts up again. Camera close-up on feet, hooves prancing; then onwards - head thrown back, neighing. The woman-horse communicates with the camera repeatedly, registering her delight or disappointment with her own impression - when it fails, when it succeeds. Crossing over, faltering, speeds and movements, in and out of becomings. Laughing to the camera with her efforts. Laughing – such pleasure! No words – all would be broken!



Lucy Gunning, *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). Video stills; sequence.

Then the horse's noises. Zones of intensity and proximity; again to be carried off. The intense relation to the horse noise emitted from the horse-woman as she becomes. Gunning moves with the impressionists with her hand-held camera; lots of close-ups; feet-hooves. And then the horse-woman who looks into the lens – hands around her mouth – looking at me as I scrutinise her moment of becoming.

In and out of frame; off frame, too much for her – for us – so that we might enter our own imaginings? These elements and particles assembled and re-assembled not so as to become some other fixed identity – oh no; only always a becoming – an in-process – of making and unmaking. There is no woman, no horse, only a doing and undoing of possible beings.

Assemblages: bit, chomp, reins, whip, hooves, prance, neigh, whiney, snort, prance, muscle, saddle, rider; trotting, rearing, galloping. Never static, always in process; in a movement between. And as viewers are touched, moved, thrilled, enthralled and, mostly, implicated.

In viewing the artwork we approach a monitor on a tall thin-legged table – like the legs of the animal – in order to view at head height. We hear the horse

before we locate the work on its leggy stand; already the horsing has begun for us – before the image of the woman takes hold of us – moving from one perspective to the next - crossings of multiplicities; of whinnying, of hooves raised high; of the power of the animal and the openness of the woman as she becomes with the horse. It is Gunning's viewing, her framing of the image that allows these becomings. Watching her artwork, we too become.

The work demands more than just the image of the horse in our mind. It is more than that visualising -horse; it takes on all the horsiness of what it might be to be a horse. It is very common for adolescent girls to have a particular passion for horses; I would imagine that these women have developed this impressionist ability since that time. Adolescence is a particularly strong spiritual/emotional time in development; it is the moment when schizophrenia may develop; it is a time when we are vulnerable to change and to the outside and the internal world; to feel the full force of our potential to be. The horse is a highly charged symbol of energy and freedom; it is hard to domesticize and train; it still retains a lot of its wild nature. Its strong bodily power; a sexual excitement of the power of the body to exceed the everyday movements. Here is a strong relationship to the human - a matching of bodies; together we can fly across the world. The horse can even spread wings and transport us. It is beautiful and most of all sexually potent - it can kill you with a flick of its powerful hoof; it can also love you unconditionally. For the adolescent girl then it is also sexual; an imagined relationship which is not attached to the law and the father; it remains with the imaginary. To become with the horse is not a defiant regression – but a projection outside the law – to virtual possibilities

– a desire, a force, which is not bounded by the symbolic; it encompasses that which exceeds the bounded self, where emotions take us further than our symbolic function with no outcome for the law. Affect being excess to the functional.

Gunning has created an image that goes beyond the mere representation which is being played out here: the woman (as already ‘pas toute/not-all’) becoming the horse. Lacan, though he insists that there is no whole of being, nevertheless privileges the woman (as the Other Sex, lacking the lack) as closer to the truth of being. But as Joan Copjec insists ‘The jouissance of the woman of which Lacan speaks has nothing to do with her capacity to transcend the symbolic or exist outside language. In fact, if woman has easier access than man to the God of jouissance, this is because she is less susceptible than he is to the lure of transcendence.’ (Copjec (2002): 9)

4.7 Mutual recognition

What is significant in my exploration of *Horse Impressionists* for my enquiry is that it enables, in the experience of the work, an identification to take place – an encounter – a scene of mutual recognition which, rather than being alienating or producing a longing for what one is not, offers the possibility of an expansion – as sensual – allowing one to go beyond questions of difference. It is productive of the spectator’s own (virtual/imaginary) narratives. In doing so it articulates a new relation for feminist aesthetics. I have explored it specifically in the way that it might enable a re-negotiation of the issue of gender, of subject positions.

For my research, for my investigation, Deleuze's notion of becoming (the possibility of becoming, with and through, what is perceived) has now become an empowering way for me to consider the demand to give up a separate viewpoint of the world. In becoming-hybrid, neither animal nor human, one becomes 'transversal'. (10) And so, in a combination of the becomings of both the animal and the human, intersections and encounters as crossings of the one and the other are possible. It is the encounters which allow this openness to life and possibilities to expand perception. Such encounters allow and articulate new possibilities for subject positions. The artwork can then be a site for such encounters – for such possibilities – for what it might produce. To make work – to be a viewer of works in an encounter with works – is to continue this ongoing relation. For a relation 'between', it is neither one nor the other.

A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or the line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both. If becoming is a block (a line-block), it is because it constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man's land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distinct or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other – and the border-proximity is indifferent to both contiguity and to distance. (Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 293)

For the woman, might her 'becoming' still raise some questions with which I started this investigation? Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming suggests that becoming-woman is an intermediate space through which all becomings must pass. They claim that all becomings take place through becoming-woman (with man as 'majoritarian par excellence') because 'woman as a molar entity has to become-woman in order that the man also becomes – or can become – woman'. Woman is then understood as the 'key

to all becomings'. Does this not echo the account of 'not-all' which Lacan credited to the woman as her excess, her relation to that which can never be known – the jouissance of the woman? Are we still caught up in a gendered hierarchy? In the woman's becoming-woman, is there still a danger of her falling into the void of her own pleasure, part of phallogentric economy? I am more concerned to consider *becoming* as a true in-between which in its line-of-flight does not return us to such positions but endlessly goes on.

Notes

1. 'The Greek etymology of the term [monster] ... leaves us in no doubt as to what is at stake: *teras/teratos* refers to both a prodigy and to a demon. It is something which evokes both horror and fascination, aberration and adoration. It is simultaneously holy and hellish, sacred and profane. Again, this simultaneity of opposite effects is the trademark of the monstrous body. [...] A working definition of the term 'monster' has been available since the late eighteenth century, when Geoffrey de Saint Hilaire organised monsters in terms of excess, lack or displacement of his/her organs. There can be too many parts or too few; the right ones can be in the wrong places or duplicated at random on the surface of the body.' 'Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences.' (Lykke and Braidotti (1996): 136)
2. 'The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the *oikos*, the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world.' (Haraway (2004): 9)
3. For example, Thomas Grunfeld's seamless joining of two kinds of animal into an unproblematic new form.
4. 'Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of a feminist speaking in tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the super-savers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, spaces, stories.' (Haraway (2004): 39)
5. Sadie Plant proposes that the encounter with the cyborg allows for a re-thinking of hybridity as a simple coupling of opposites to reveal the complexity of another relation to the other which does not seek incorporation of the other into its own economy. It is a feminist project in that the cyborg demands a challenge to the notion of the self and the other, nature

and culture divide, and the body and the machine. For Plant, the cyborg offers possibilities for feminist thinking:

'Cybernetic feminism does not, like many of its predecessors, including that proposed in Irigaray's recent work, seek out for woman a subjectivity, an identity or even a sexuality of her own: there is no subject position and no identity on the other side of the screens. And female sexuality is always in excess of anything that could be called 'her own'. Woman cannot exist 'like man'; neither can the machine. As soon [as] her mimicry earns her equality, she is already something, and somewhere, other than him.' (Plant (1997): 63)

6. Janet Biggs explores in her essay 'Becoming-hysterical - becoming-animal – becoming-woman in *The Horse Impressionists* (Lucy Gunning)' in the *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Vol3/issue2, September (2004): 123-138. She suggests that Deleuze and Guattari are not in fact proposing a position beyond gender hierarchies, but perpetuating phallogocentric discourse with their repetition of man as the standard identity.

7. I was Lucy's tutor at Goldsmiths College when she made this work. I was so moved by it when she showed it to me that tears welled up in my eyes; I was completely moved by it – deeply affected.

8. 'If we interpret the word "like" as a metaphor, or propose a structural analogy of relations [...] we understand nothing of becoming. The word "like" is one of those words that change drastically in meaning and function when they are used in connection with haecceities, when they are made into expressions of becomings instead of signified states or signifying relations'. (Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 274)

9. '...a becoming-molecular in which the voice itself is instrumentalized'. (Deleuze & Guattari *ibid*: 308). The voice deterritorialized as double. (Deleuze & Guattari *ibid*: 304)

10. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari use the example of the novel *Moby Dick* to describe the relationship of Ahab and the whale, the one with the other. It is a transversal becoming. (Deleuze & Guattari *ibid*: 243)

5.00 On Being Submerged. *Out of The Blue* (2003) (6min. 45secs video, looped; (3 screen video installation) See DVD # 4.

Exhibited at *Close Encounters of the Other Kind*, at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London, May 2003. For video documentation of the exhibition, see DVD # 6.



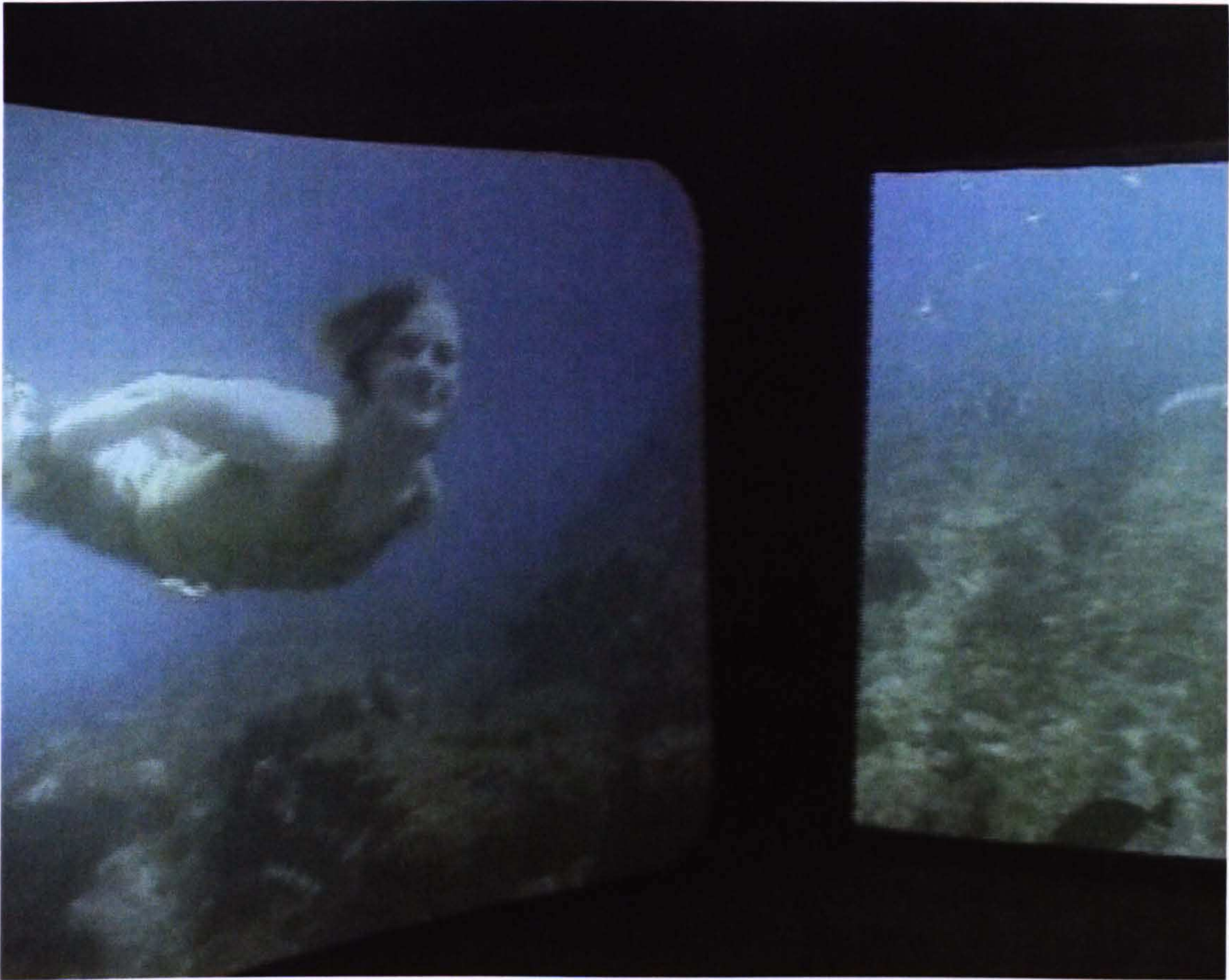
Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Video still.

In this section, in an exploration through writing of this piece of work, I am intent on further examining the possibilities offered by Deleuzian thinking for the possibilities for becoming. How might a becoming as an ongoing process of crossings over in encounters between elements, as non hierarchical, enable a re-situating – a shift; a repetition which doesn't return us to the crippling relation to loss theorised by dominant western psychoanalytic and philosophical thought (our so-called traumatic origins)? What might this

encounter produce as an oscillating in-between? I am exploring how the encounter with the artwork might allow such shifts in positioning. How the viewer can be moved by the experience in order to have a more enabling account of the self. I explore how *Out of The Blue* (2003) might allow such encounters. It is the third work in my exhibition at Trinity Buoy Wharf (a large site including a lighthouse situated next to the river Thames in London) entitled *Close Encounters of the Other Kind* (see Appendix #2).

5.1. Being submerged in a space of otherness

You enter the dark basement gallery at Trinity Buoy Wharf to find three large (10' x 8') screens placed in close proximity to each other in the centre of this large space (1); they are positioned in an arc in order to surround you; they are taller than you. You approach and enter the space defined by these three screens; you have the sensation of being in an aquarium – the sense of being submerged in deep water, in an endless blue space of movement as images caught on the screens are recognisable as an underwater scene. Though the seabed is often visible on the lower part of the screens, you are surrounded, submerged, in a luminous endless blue – looking out into the abyss. You are projected into an other element; you have broken through a line of upper and lower that separates life and death into this element which is not possible for you to survive in, an alien location where you are not master; below and beyond your lived experience, of the realm of language, of consciousness, of control, of rules, laws, predictability – at home.



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Installation view.

My intention with this artwork is to create an environment in which the viewer is placed in a different relation to the other; I now submerge the viewer of the artwork in a space of otherness; the original element of water, a possible pre-linguistic territory, the outside of time, space, subjectivity. I will explore this space which preceded us; but rather than proposing a possible relation to that which has been lost (a longing to return) I find here other possibilities for the viewer. I will follow, respond, and reflect.

You have ventured here before;

You have put your head under before;

You have held your breath before and wondered at the strangeness, the myths, this base element out of which came the first life. But only for a short time; there are things here, which you don't know about. This is a dangerous place of the dissolving of the self; the space of necessary repression.

This return though offers a return to the trap of believing in an elsewhere – as a core of one's being; it is a false lure. I will not allow you to continue with such comfortable nonsense.

This is Freud's Oceanic feeling: 'Interpretosis', a representational schema of the west where every experienced affect is read as the signifier of some original scene. (2) I intend to make a very different proposition for this piece of work and consider, instead, Deleuze's *Universal*, which is not a generalisation as that which is irreducible to any common form. (Colebrook (2002): 36) It will open far more enabling possibilities.

5.2 Sound as a refrain from the body-machine, as between

As soon as you entered the gallery you were overwhelmed by the strong sound (which fills the viewing space) which you soon recognised as the laboured breathing of an aqualung as it rhythmically sucks in the oxygen – your true element. The sound is reassuring in its deliberate, powerful rhythm; it will sustain you in this alien world. As it threatens to dissolve you, might this immersion allow other possibilities than won't collapse you back into sameness? Can this be a place where differences can co-exist? The sound makes you aware of your every move and effort – though the camera is still and waiting as you take your place here in this sensuous location, surrounded by the screens. Air is sucked in from the oxygen tank and expelled as bubbles which escape to the top of the ocean; the rhythmic sound is both body and machine. A refrain of the in-between of the body-machine, rhythmic, ongoing, energy made audible; it is not voice, it is not mechanic, but *between* them. Air and water collide (as bubbles) to find their line of flight (to the surface); 'molecular flows' (Deleuze), though attached to the body (which is now not gendered) they are beyond the field of language (the voice which denotes the

5.3 The encounter as exchange; productive of affective rather than cognitive responses

And then the encounter:

You are in the space of seeing and being seen

Your privileged selection of viewing is curtailed here

You await the look of the other.



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.

The camera is still, yet the water around you is full of movement. It is not the safe, clear water of the fabricated swimming pool where you have opened your eyes before to the distortions of another element; this water is a flow of changing currents (nothing is static except your own enclosed body) bringing, to your delight, the most amazing beautiful small fish to flash their bright colours and dart away out of your vision, off screen. Though you have the illusion of looking into the infinite, in fact, you can't see far, visibility is clouded; it is dense with movement and life – this stuff that surrounds you. It is highly colourful – the exotic waters of some fabulous location. This is a seductive scene; it proposes an exchange between you and it; you are being addressed – caught up in something outside yourself.

It is my intention to allow for an openness to oneself, through affect. It is intensive as it happens to us and across us before we attempt to

encode our experience. I am asking how affect then might disrupt the inclination of reducing everything to a unified meaningful world by scrambling the faculties and opening the viewer up to difference. To produce affective rather than cognitive responses. This is a Deleuzian notion, quite different to the longed for return to the body of the mother which Freudian interpretation would propose. Such possibilities do not return the subject to lack (an original whole) but offer other connections which enhance desire. (5)



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.

You await more encounters – that which will swim past the camera; that which will seek you out, come close to your body – your body which is immobile in this mobile world.

This is to be aware of the body as the site of mediation. Our everyday seeing of the world is organised from our individual interested and embodied viewpoint. I encounter my flow of perceptions and produce 'my' world as organised schemes – an external world – to produce a presupposed 'we' of shared structures. I am, so, open to the other.

You are not master here; you look in pleasure but also in fear. See and are seen behind the camera which is your eye. (6)

You are enveloped in the rhythmic flow of movement across and between the screens; you have to turn your body in following the entry and exits, the appearance and disappearance, of fish, turtle and sting ray; whole shoals of fish turning and gliding past – in one direction and then the other. The endless flow which draws you with it, across and between the screens; they enter and leave the screen, to loop and return – to free time from the now.

How might such encounters with what one is not, challenge and cause transformation? How not to merely (and so easily) collapse into the other (thereby losing oneself)? How to be in the relation with the other? Might there be a crossing over of the two: the you and the not you; with no cancelling out of difference?



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite images; sequence.

5.4 Past and future now in the present

This space, this other space of rhythm and flow of time and memory, refuses the need to stabilise the body into the single line of time. You move from the virtual to the actual; your past, your impersonal memory, is activated in this deep alien space of ebb and flow. In this space memory exists virtually alongside the present; an impersonal memory – as the past of all of us, as the past from which we emerge. (7)

And so the virtual interrupts our daily reality to produce a lived experience which includes an experience of time as where both past and future are liable to intervene. We are now in a place (in the cinematic experience) where this tendency is apparent; we are not entrenched in the ordered world viewed from the everyday. This space admits neither Self nor I. (8) Here there is an interruption of the sequence of time by the virtual to give us a new image of time – a time of memory that holds all the events and becomings of life in a whole. Time here has an eternal and virtual element. (9)

We can move backwards and forwards through the flow of time, to think other durations; we come here to be free from the illusion that life flows from one movement to the next and that we exist 'in' some general line of time. We can now think time as an intensive flow; not organised and fixed by some static point of view. (10)

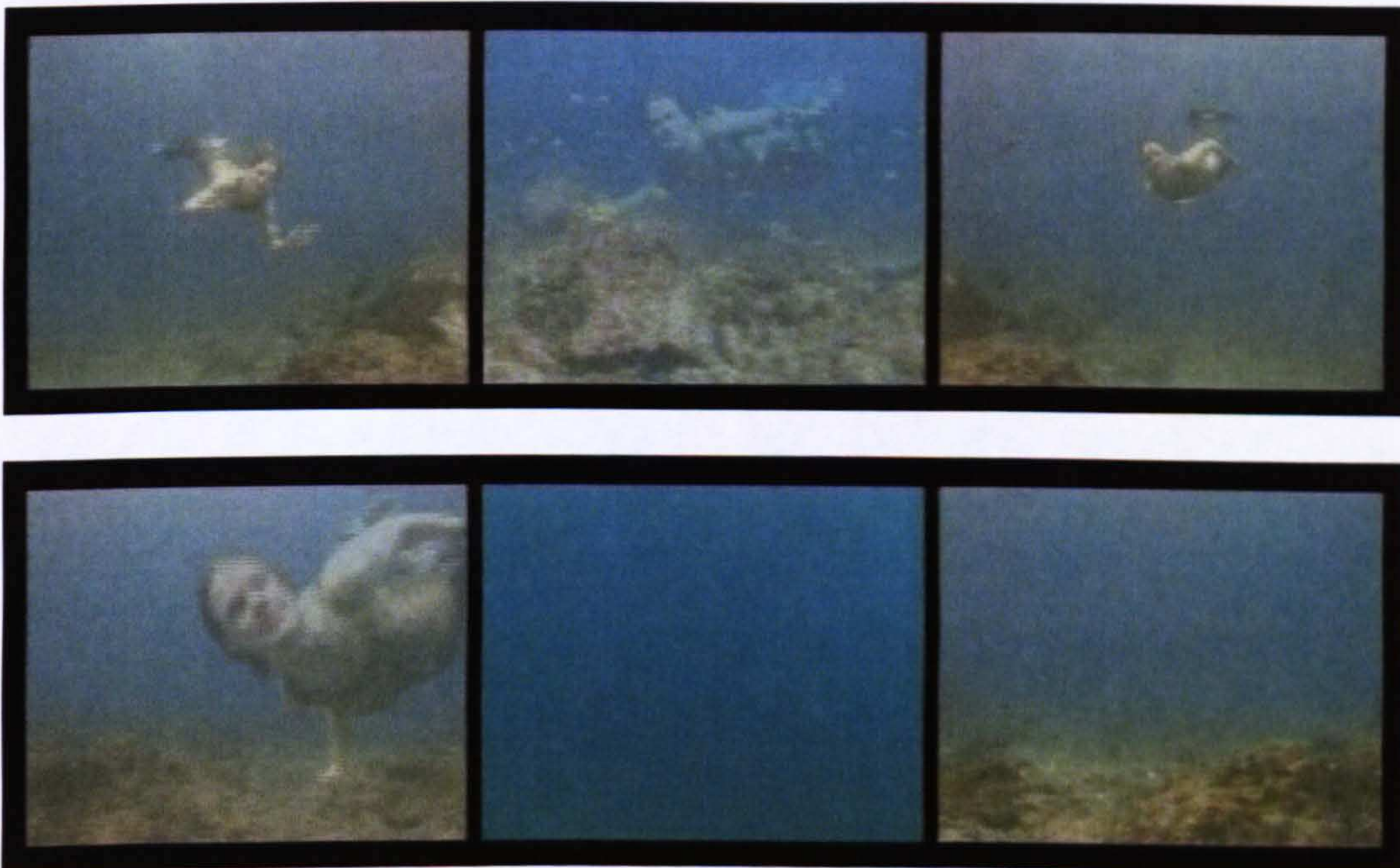
Deleuze proposes that the inhuman eye of the camera liberates the viewer from the tendency to sequence images from the individual single viewpoint by creating a number of competing viewpoints and angles. By presenting images through an editing process of cutting there is a disruption to the inclination of organising structures and so transform life, altering the possible perception of life. Released from this organising tendency we are able to see imaging itself and dislodge the belief in the coherent presumed shared experience of life. According to Deleuze we are, through the camera (or rather, cinema), able to 'see' without imposing our own interested selective view and get a sense of the image itself. Can the artwork (as moving image, here) present this challenge to the viewer: to dislodge the act of viewing from its goal of centring the so-called 'self'? It is the camera, unlike the selective human eye, which can 'see' or 'perceive' without

imposing concepts and so does not organise a fixed viewpoint but itself moves across movements. For Deleuze, this is the power of the movement-image: the power to free movement from an organised single, interested viewpoint.

Here there is a rethinking of other durations. From our fixed point of observation we use time to locate and fix our own past and possible future; our 'now' and 'present' which is connected to a perceived whole; a connecting of various points of action. (11)

Does the artwork have the capacity then to free us from this illusion of this self constructed in an ordered world? Through the use of the camera (in particular) we are able to experience time as divergent pulsations or differences rather than a line in which movement takes place. The repetitions of the images in a continuous loop in this work, which surround the viewer, propose to undo such perceptions.

The sequence of life flow and fade and reappear. The colour and movement is sensual and transfixing. And then the mermaid ...



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite images; sequence.

5.5 The Mermaid

She comes to seek you out

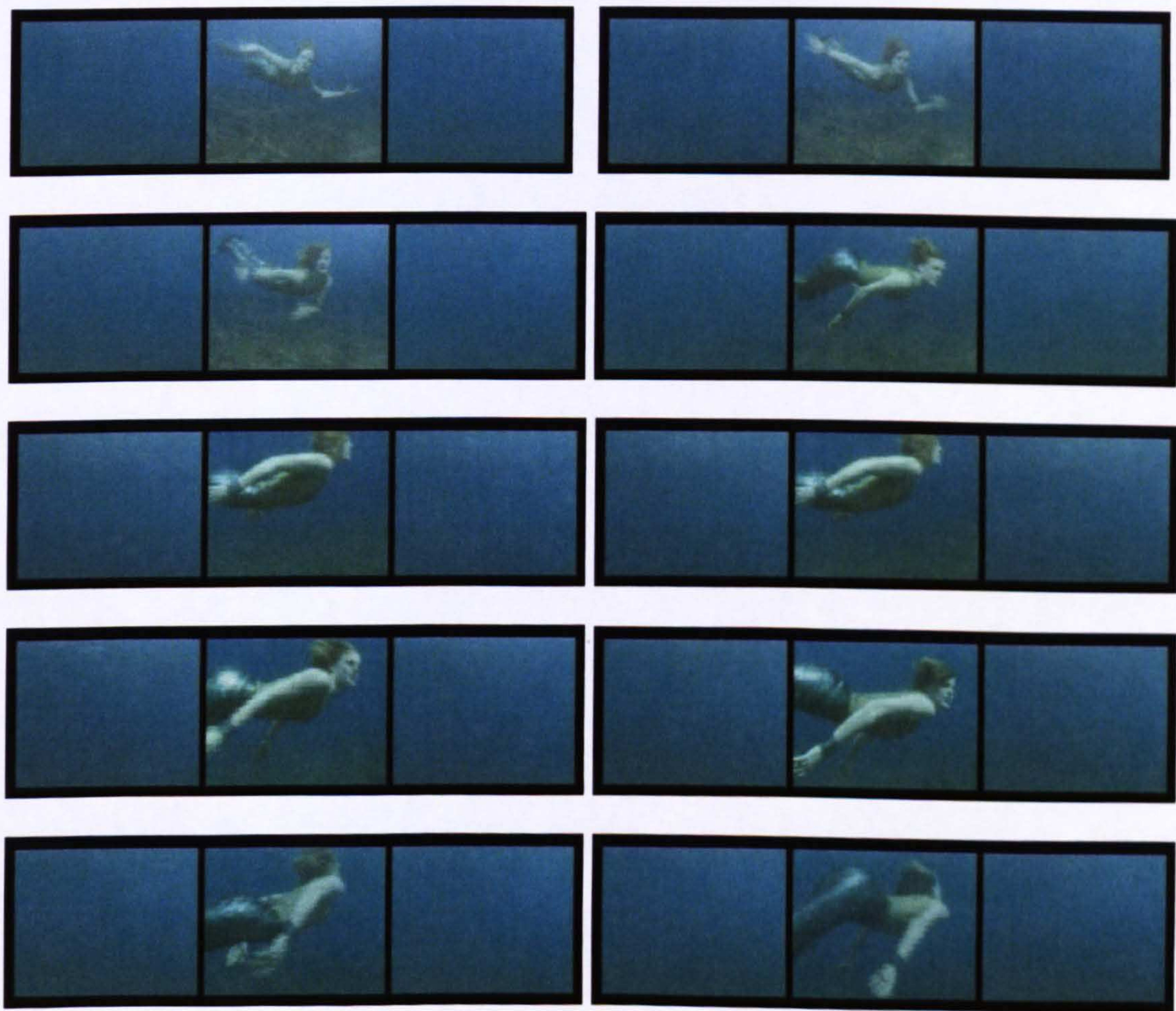
She moves towards you and looks straight at you –

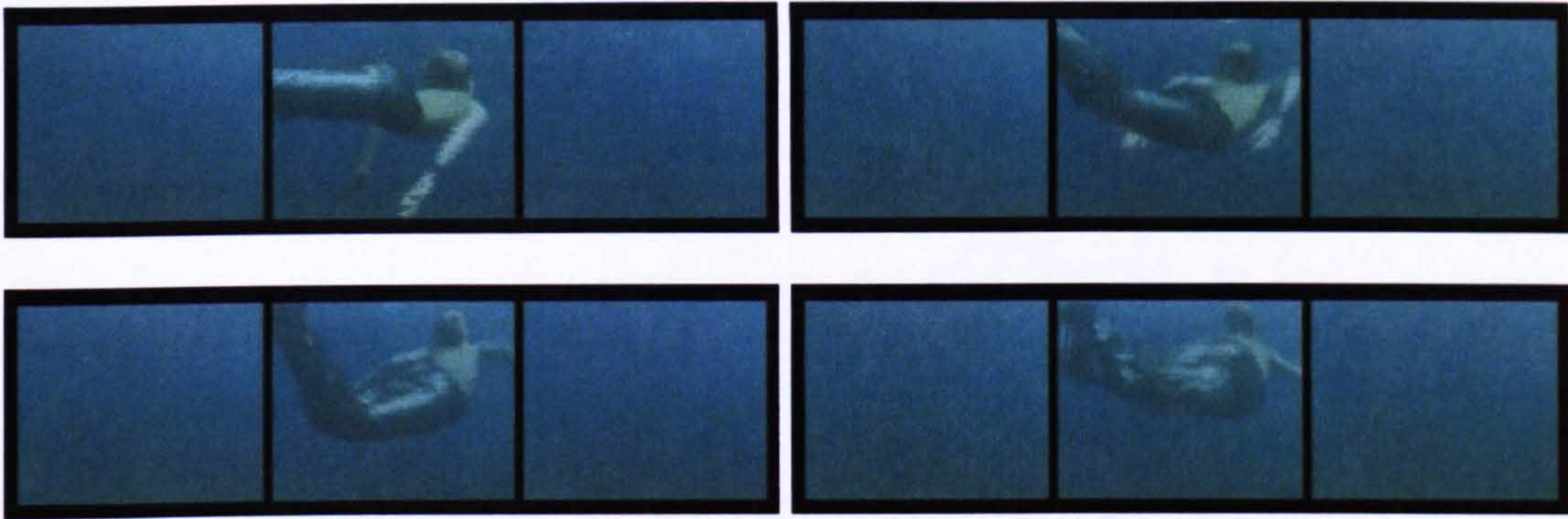
She, who is more like you but is more at home here

This mermaid, both virtual and real, which you imagine, which you desire

This mythical creature enters and leaves the screen – passes between and across the screens; close up and at a distance. But unlike you, she knows neither time nor any death; she moves forever in this eternal element.

She is beautiful, and smiling; she appears again and again; close up to you, she flicks her tail at you – provocative – knowing. (12)





Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite images; sequence.

She is the encounter with the other; an anxiety is evoked of the fantasized fear of castration, of the *vagina dentate*, the anxiety at the arrival of the other, of the possible response. You are confused and excited by possibilities which are unknown.

She is between the human and the inhuman – both virtual and real.

She is steeped in mythology; you know of her allure. (13)

There is another possibility for considering this relation: the human can become *more than itself*; it can expand so as not to be limited to a foundationalist account of the self (not by attempting to affirm its humanity) by ‘becoming-hybrid’ with what is not itself. (14).

She has no genitalia – she is as though already castrated – her legs are tied together. She is a manifestation of all of the ‘not-all’ yet she is also *more than*.

She remains eternally in this mythological state of a relation to the all of pre-history, to lure you to your death. Her tail is pre-phallic – before the division that is language and the relation to having. She has no language (she does not speak; only later on – as siren – will her voice lure you to your death). (15)

Castration has banished us from paradise – from eternal pleasure.

How does this artwork refuse an encounter which will pull you in to such fictions (that one is tragically enmeshed in the having/not-having of Lacanian theorising)? I suggest that it is the mermaid which might enable another possibility. This is a game not a pretence; *this* mermaid

is but a performance of that mythical figure -has real-life black rubber flippers with green trim to match her sequined lower body and glittering earrings; artifice is made apparent – *this* mermaid is constructed for your pleasure.

She is in fact my daughter, whose legs I have bound together and asked to dive, unaided, in order to act out another possibility. She has trained in order to perform this task for me; it is very hard work – but she is a strong swimmer and a girl of strong determination – she loves to act the part. (16)

Relating to this fictitious mermaid brings another relation to simulacra; she stands for a possibility of understanding the world as offering more than the notion of the image as the copy of an actual world - of offering the possibility an immanent life of imaging or simulation. The mermaid becomes a process of becoming in relation to other becomings so that we no longer consider ourselves as fixed perceivers set over and against life.

She's in the now (this mermaid is definitely modern) – not of that past – of your longing – she is past and present and future; no long flowing locks – just Versace glamour. She morphs with the fish, with the Stingray; she plays alongside the Turtle, appearing and disappearing, near and far. Morphing with, crossing over with, as she does with you. But she doesn't become them, or you.

She is hybrid, and you give yourself over to this spectacle of virtual and real – it is not hard for you to do this. In so doing you are freed from your interested and organising perception, so that perception itself can be opened up beyond itself.

Here is the freedom from seeing oneself as a point of view detached from life. Freed from the human we can open up to the event of becoming.

She propels you back into the now – out of the oceanic feeling that you are being seduced by - that longing for some Freudian pre-Edenic past; this is not an option for you here; the myth can be transformed right here, on this screen – to allow for another option: one of going on.

You are placed back in the now – a now that crosses over time.

She refuses your look – as ‘Other’. Yet she knows of her seductive power – her look – the moment when she captures you as viewer.

She will not lure you back into that past; the repressed that can only return as traumatic. Her presence does not promise a death – she says ‘no’ – she flips past with her tail; she comes again and again encircling you. Morphing; crossing-over. (17)



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.

She is at home with the turtle; this timeless creature, this figure of receptiveness – old and wise, travelling the ocean.

She is one with it – this young modern creature on your side of the screen *and* on the other.

And you invest in it; this persona that goes against and will allow you to recoup that which has been repressed. This is mimicry of a virtual encounter; it claims the virtual as the space itself – as montage. (18)



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.

I have made cuts during the editing process in order to disrupt the viewer from experiencing time (and consequently themselves) as being possible to be perceived from a static point of view, but rather as indirect and mobile, open to variation. Deleuze claims that it is the inhuman eye of the camera that liberates us from the fixed and moral notion of man. He aims in his discussion of the cinema (Deleuze 1986) to destroy the hegemony of the fixed observer who synthesises time into a static whole; and allow an affective experience to produce difference. This is what this thesis claims to do; my practice and theory now can come together. The artwork produces other more enabling possibilities.

This exchange, this artwork as projected illusional time and space, with you, proposes to openly embrace the virtual as site of creative production, of new realities – not of oppositions (19).

The mermaid is a figure which is both copy and original and as such seeks to produce new selves. It resists nostalgia. Life is and always has been simulation; the idea of the real world as lost and unavailable is exposed as a sham. There is no original; here we have a simulation which becomes other than itself through the very power of a life which is more than itself.

There is a disruption of you as the originator of viewing and knowledge.

Here you are now open to the other. An inter-subjective exchange is possible.

You are made hybrid – same and different at the same time.



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.

5.6 A reciprocal subjectivity

There is a collapse of boundaries here – yet the powerful ongoing sound of the aqualung sustains you – it will keep its rhythm; though sometimes it falters and the breath is suspended – something is immanent – it freezes your look, it plays on your emotions; you too hold your breath.

You are vulnerable;

You are not the voyeur to select and control at your pleasure.

You cannot see far into this dense blue.

Your perspective is gone – your subjectivity is in question.

Because the screens surround you, you cannot see everything at once; you are attempting to follow the movement across the screens, but as you focus on one, there is something else happening on another. Your gaze as a unifying point no longer applies. There is a dismantling of your desire for an organised and interested viewpoint; you now go with the flow; an inter-projection takes place. The truth and value of the body (the concept of embodiment) now becomes a question.

How to be in an affective relation (to this image that assaults you)?

How to understand and be in a relation to the virtual world,

To be in a relation to the artwork which produces a concept of difference; to be in a relation to what life might become?

Here is the power to interrupt synthesis and order. We may take experience now to be as it actually is: sensible data – the affective which assaults us and the conceptual response we give to it. It is the artwork which enables this.

There is a shift into a state of anti-presence; presence/absence replaced.

There is now a change in questions of one's founding subjectivity as catastrophic/traumatic – loss. (Interpellation). In this moment of immersion you are in a place where time and movement are put into question. Signifiers collapse. There is a collapse of hierarchies and boundaries in order to solicit new relations of understanding. A reciprocal you/them, me/her. There is a blending of the subject in this space.

As subject you are open to otherness.

A projection of your fear outwards onto the field of the other now comes into a more complex state down here.

You are turned back into a question – an unstable category.

You are now an affective body – a body now open to turbulence

An importance of something that arises at the moment of the encounter with the work – as performative. This encounter must overwhelm if transformation is to come.

Your memory of all pasts and all futures is active in this below-surface space.

You peer out into the blue, impenetrable to your gaze; there is no self-reflection of the surface here to reinforce your 'I'.

Your corporeality is but surface – now, in this deep space of memory and time. (20)

You see yourself turned inside out as your body is visible for others to see.

You await this return – it will come to you in this space; your subjectivity passes beyond the visible.

5.7 The shark

The shark, when it arrives, suddenly, straight at you, mouth wide open

(Vagina dentate – the open mouth of the shark – to consume you – castrate you) presents you with a moment of pure terror, and yet after you gasp at its sudden violent attack, you laugh with pleasure. (21) The terror is easily overcome. (22)



Out of The Blue (2003) (3 screen video installation) Composite image.

What is the dynamic of the shark? The effect of the shark's appearance in this installation I hope does more than the usual, traditional encounters, as punctum. Might the shark allow an oscillation between different spaces? The fish and the mermaid – their appearance and disappearance, their morphing into each other as an easy option is unsettled by the violent appearance of the shark. Now you do not remain on this level but evolve into something else. There is real pleasure in the giving over to this otherness; an embracing of the other – it enhances our chances of going on. Things that have been repressed are here recuperated. If you were afraid of being held captive you now are able to move on.

Might this encounter be transformative? It is not a re-enactment of castration, nor does it offer a false hope of a traumatic return (death). The process of seduction as paralysing is here undone; being transfixed is momentary – the breathing can continue. Memory and desire enter in. You experience yourself to be in flux (becoming) rather than a self that has submitted to the law. (23)

The shark hits and then reverberates back into the space – taking you firstly out of the easy displacement of one and the other to a place of continuous dynamic exchange which knows no safe boundaries. The shark resists the

simplistic reading as eruption of the unrepresentable, momentarily into the everyday; its appearance questions how such spaces are constituted in the first place.

It is my intention to create another structure in which transformation may take place: there is trauma in it; to create another desire through movement and affect. A movement to produce, through the experience, transformative possibilities. The work proposes to openly embrace the virtual as site of creative production of new realities not of oppositions.

Notes

1. See Appendix # 2 for plan of installation.

2. This longing for a return to some mythical primordial mother – child dyad where all things were contained and all happiness existed (Freud's death drive). As it is a mythical state, the search for it is in vain, what Lacan names now as remnants are lost objects (*objects a*) as simulacra of the lost (maternal) object. Both Freud and Lacan also refer here to this as *das Ding*.

3. Lacan's screen, the two sides to the sheet of paper. The sound is from the under-water cameraman's aqualung and we, the viewer, come also to be displaced by him behind the camera; an awareness of the sounds produced by our own bodies in the gallery space and the space created by locating the aqualung sound – on the screen – between us and the space beyond – as two sides of the same element.

4. Lacan; *What is a Picture?* (Lacan 1977a).

5. Deleuze does not begin from a relation to lack – for that which we once had, but from connections, where life strives to enhance itself through connecting with other desires and where power can therefore be understood to be not the repression of desire, but the expansion of it. Power therefore as that which produces us in a mutual recognition not as that which oppresses us in a subjugated position. Desire can be thought of as positive and productive which will allow for a radically new approach to politics and the relationship between politics and the imagination.

6. Kaja Silverman explores the televisual screen as resisting the desire to return to the site of loss.

7. For Deleuze, the time we experience is split in two; the past, or impersonal memory which is virtual, and our actual lines of lived time. So that the life we experience from day to day, moment to moment is an actualisation of that pure, impersonal memory which can interrupt our world; memory is real and exists virtually alongside the present so that:

From such a personal memory.....we can pass to impersonal memory: the idea of the language as belonging to no actual speaker, as the past of 'us' all, as the past from which we emerge. (Colebrook 2002: 33)

8. And so allow other possibilities for this encounter.

9. (Deleuze 1990)

10. Deleuze claims that the cinematic affect liberates us from our tendency to spacialise time as a line connecting various points of action. He proposes cinema as the very process that takes us away from actualised objects and wholes; the cinematic experience therefore puts the viewer in a new relation to the *movement-image* where the camera itself moves while the body also moves and so creates another movement across another moving body to produce a possibility of experiencing movement itself and be freed from view-point. He describes time outside of a connection of one movement to another; the inhuman eye of the camera allows for a reception of data that is not located in a subject and so can convey the capacity of life to go beyond its human recognisable and already given forms. (Deleuze 1986)

11. We can now understand the human self as an effect of time rather than the illusion of time as the connection of homogeneous units within a pre-given whole. Time, then, is not extensive; it is not the connection of distinct units. (Colebrook (2002): 41). We can now think of time as a flow where we are able to move backwards and forwards and not as a sequence of an unfolding of linear events moving from one moment to the next.

12. For Lacan, (in his *Encore* seminar) while maintaining that there is no separate ethics of the feminine, claims that it is the woman who is privileged as she remains closer to the truth of being 'while the man obfuscates this truth through a nostalgic, secondary operation that allows him to maintain a belief in the plenitude of being to come [...] it is woman who is guardian of the not-all of being.' (Copjec (2002): 7). Lacan refers to Antigone as this being *par excellence*. (Mitchell and Rose 1982)

13. Like 'the woman' she (this mermaid) is 'not-all' (Lacan) and a reminder of the impossibility of completion; to remind us that though we are all constituted as lacking, the woman is privileged in that she lacks even the lack. Joan Copjec, discussing Lacan's seminar on feminine sexuality, claims that his famous formulation of a feminine 'not-all' is in fact a proposal that: 'there is no whole, no 'all' of woman, of that she is not One, is fundamentally an answer not just to the question of being, but to being as such. It is not only feminine being, but being in general that resists being assembled into a whole'. (Copjec (2002): 6)

14. I am making a shift here – an anti-oedipal proposition for thinking the subject which is proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. A possibility of being which is not related to the father, but to a multiplicity of identities; a '*becoming*' (Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 233)

15. Though the siren's song is one that also is outside of language.

16. This footage was shot in Australia while visiting one of my sons; it was a dramatic story of diving, rough sea, me sea-sick on the boat while my dear daughter attempts to dive 10 metres below in order to find the camera man; without goggles she is virtually blind.

17. 'Woman' has no standard or norm for her and is an open term in becoming. Some underlying essence as majoritarian – a distinct 'I' (therefore anti-essentialist; there is no possible feminine space to explore as distinct and separate; but a 'becoming-woman' as a 'minor' (Deleuze and Guattari). Here is a more profound repetition – as becoming – repeating the past – to repeat the force and difference of time, producing art today that is disruptive of the present; 'repeats not in order to express what goes before but to express an untimely power, a power of language to disrupt identity and coherence' (Colebrook (2002): 119). Minoritarian politics do not have a pre-given (or transcendent) measure or norm for inclusion or identity (Colebrook (2002): 117).

18. The technique of montage in the filmic process allows for no point in time to be privileged over another (Deleuze (1986): 1). Montage places one point of view or flow of time alongside or superimposed onto another, but does not present them as a possibility of reducing them to the same single viewing point. It exposes the divergence of time that makes up the whole of

time. So that: 'time is imaged indirectly as the whole that produces all these different and incommensurable movements'. (Colebrook (2002): 44)

19. Insisting on the actual and the virtual as fully real, with the virtual being an equal power. Arguing against Baudrillard's society of the simulacrum, Deleuze asserts that the real is always actual-virtual: there is no 'original' process of simulation; not dividing the world into actual reality and its unreal virtual copy.

20. Interpretive relationship of embodied memories described by Merleau-Ponty as intercorporeality – animating other bodies besides your own – an exhaustible death; simultaneously seen and being seen.

21. The pleasure of the mouth as sexual. (Copjec (2002): 59) Lacan: 'Even when you stuff the mouth – the mouth that opens in the register of the drive – it is not the food that satisfies it, it is, the pleasure of the mouth' (Seminar XI: 167). The mouth as site of erotic stimulation. After the initial pleasure of the satisfaction of the milk from the mother's breast, comes the imagined satisfaction.

22. The appearance of the shark: Žižek 'Grimaces of the Real or When the Phallus Appears.' *October* magazine, vol. 58 (1989): 46.

23. A simulation of life and death in the image/screen (Phelan 1997).

6.00 A Loving Encounter. *Love Stories* (2004). (Two screen video installation; 12 minutes 37 seconds, looped)

Video Installation in the West Gallery of *The Wallace Collection* (24th June, 2004). See DVD # 5 for 2 screen layout. See DVD # 7 for documentation of exhibition (5 minutes). See also Appendix No. # 3 for diagram of installation; and Appendix # 4 for Invitation & Press Release.)

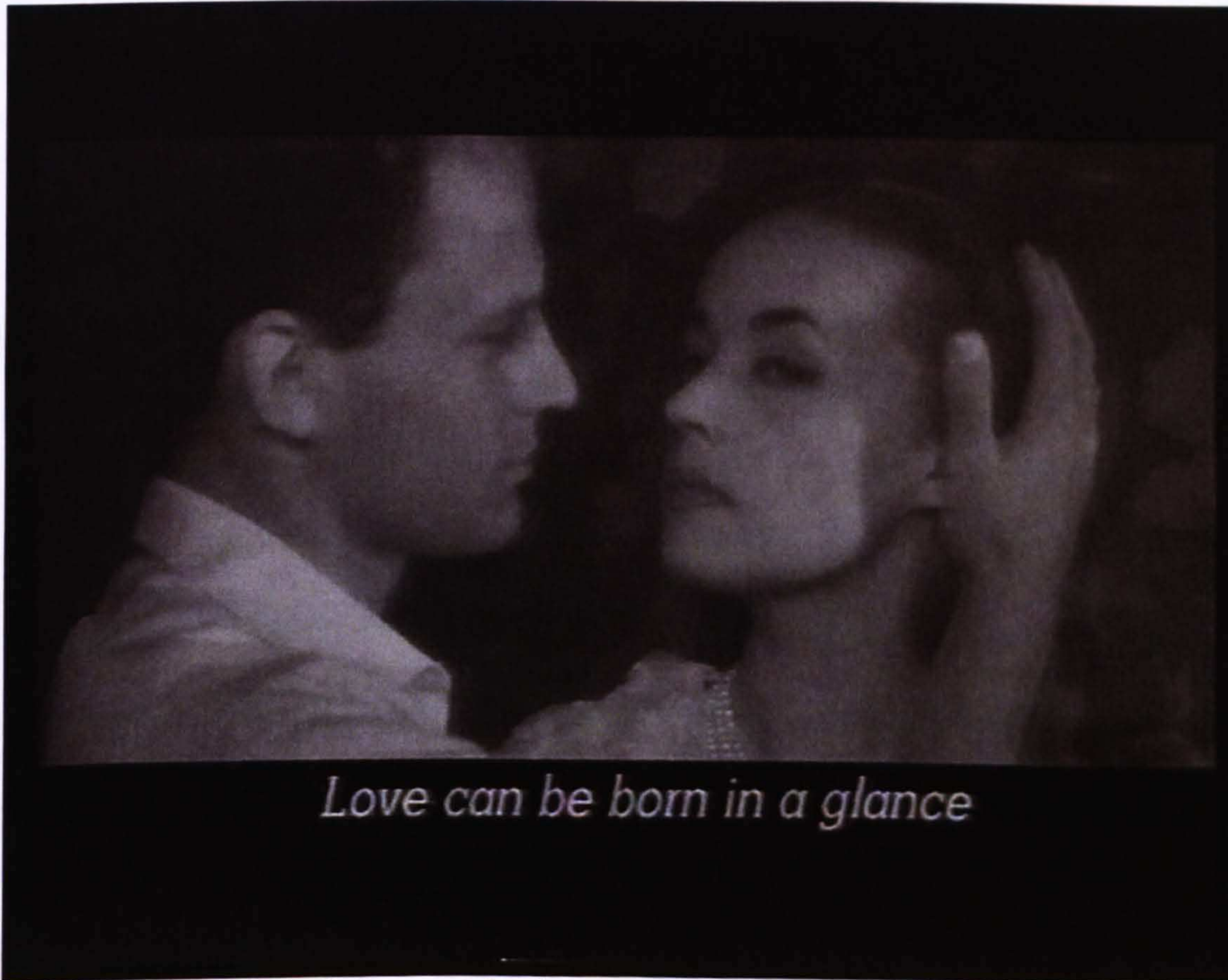


Love Stories (2004). Exhibition Poster: Wallace Collection

While working on the exhibition *Close Encounters of the Other Kind* I had begun to think how I might develop these issues concerning the viewer's role in the actual space of the artwork. I had made a simple diagram of an installation which would place the viewer centrally in the space of the artwork

and set up a dynamic between two screens where 'difference' might be played out across and between them in such a way as to be inclusive of the viewer (see diagram in Appendix # 4). The images on the screens needed to engage the viewer in an encounter which might offer transformative possibilities.

This diagram developed into *Love Stories* (2004), my final artwork for this research project. This would offer quite different opportunities to inform the viewer's imaginary spaces, especially in relation to its actual setting (in this case: The Wallace Collection, London) rather than the previous exhibition at Trinity Buoy Wharf.



Love can be born in a glance

Love Stories (2004). Invitation card: front.

6.1 *Love Stories*; an installation as inclusive of the museum

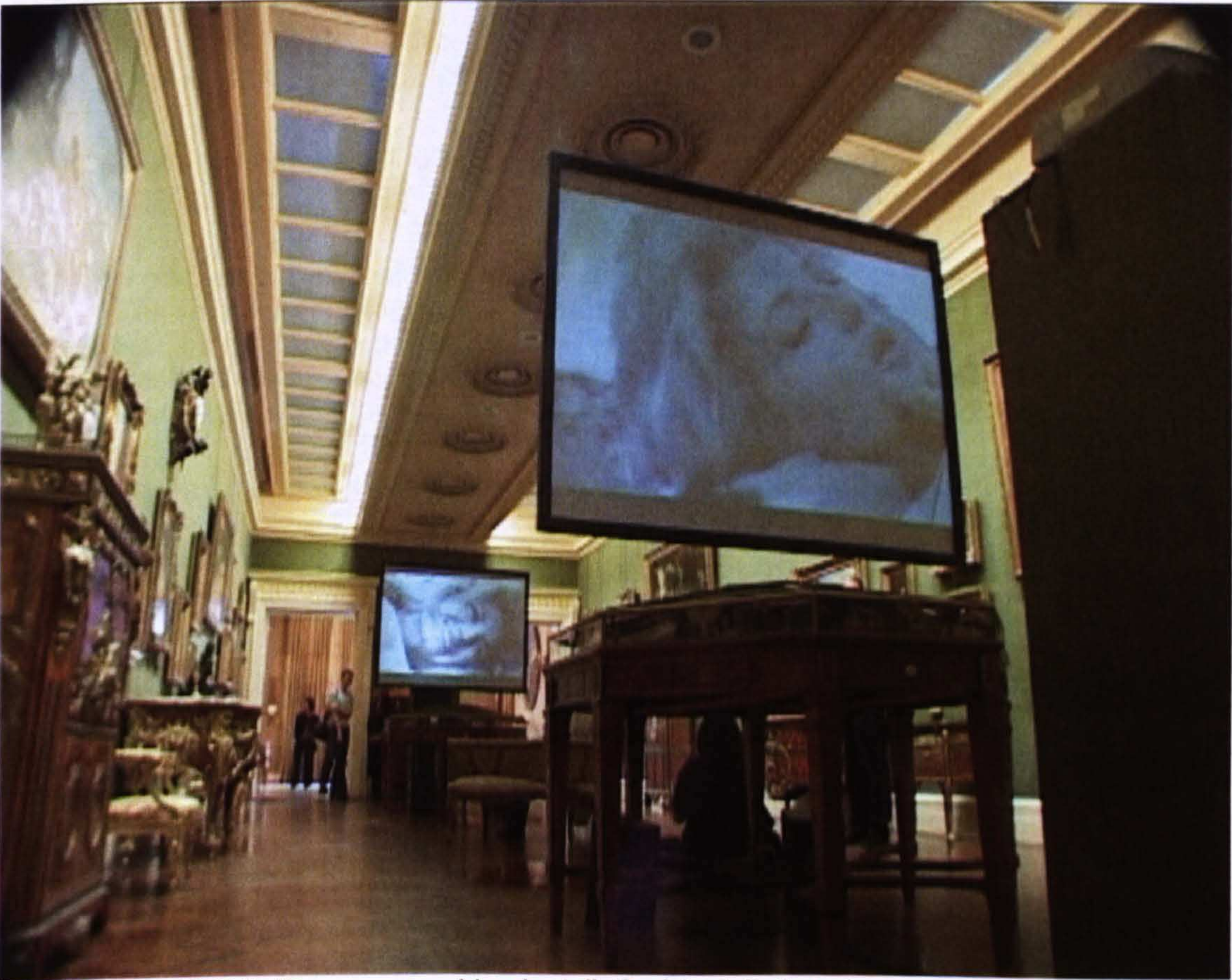
The visitor to the West Gallery at the Wallace Collection (1) is confronted with this artwork (*Love Stories*) installed within what is a familiar museum display of 18th Century French paintings, objects, ornaments and furniture. The surprise (as I had not anticipated it) for me as the maker of the installation was to witness, from several (though not many) visitors, what became a familiar pattern of surprise, hostility and refusal to engage with what must have been read as an unwelcome intrusion into their anticipated pleasurable viewing of the collection. (2) The 'intrusion' of my installation becomes a challenge to the usual experience of museum visiting by shifting the visitor from what I would claim to be the safe art historical conditions of viewing which proposes a coherent and unitary interpretation of artworks being presented for scrutiny.

It was not my intention (nor a consideration) when siting this piece of work in the Wallace collection to challenge the gaze of the museum visitor; I intended it as, rather, a loving invitation, to enable an expanding of the museum, to open up the viewing subject to the full potential for the possibilities of an artwork / the experience of an encounter with the work of art. I propose that to experience an artwork is more than the ritualistic consumption of culture; it allows an opportunity to open up to more than what one might know. I intend it as a loving gesture which is offered here to the visitor, inclusive rather than alienating. It was a surprise therefore to find such resistance from some visitors to the collection. The gallery Director and curators also had this expansive view of *Love Stories* (2004) when they made the decision to accept

my proposal for the installation (3); they were wholehearted in the possibility for the work to open up the experience of the museum to the contemporary visitor; (I will describe this more fully later on).

I suspect that the first objection from this particular type of visitor could be to the erotic and sensuous nature of the installation (even though this museum is full of erotic paintings) and then to the medium of film (the strategically placed screens) interpreted as a low cultural form, as incompatible with the gallery's priceless artefacts (the conflicting hierarchies of historical paintings and movies). Yet the images on the screen and the physical form of the installation itself are exactly what is at stake for me with this piece of work; they are intended to engage dynamically with each other. The choice and editing of the images I use in this piece of work is a response to the lushness of this 18th-century feminine space and intends to explore the connections; one enhances the other: contemporary and historical, high and (supposedly) low (as film) culture come together to create quite a different viewing experience, and one which to the majority of the visitors was very positive. It is this relation of supposed conflicting opposition which is being explored in this research which in this artwork operates on several levels. With *Love Stories* (2004), one has to re-examine one's usual position as a viewer, open oneself to a possible re-locating of the self; the collection in this gallery is now changed for the visitor. The installation demands an encounter with the gallery in the *present* where viewing practices and the function of spectatorship come into question. One's usual passive consumption of the museum artefact is challenged by an urgent demand for an active response

generated by the installation and the images on the screens. (4). I had not anticipated that this might be resisted by some visitors – even refused. The anticipated pleasure of the familiar collection is known and safe; it reasserts the supposed knowledge of the viewer and reassures a stable, unified self. It is the intention of this thesis to produce work which challenges such notions, to dislodge such proposals for subjectivity. There is a subversive potential to visual pleasure; a fear of being seduced by the image and an anxiety about that pleasure could have been partly a reason for dismissal of the installation for those visitors described.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

6.2 The *I, You, and Them* exchange as the ‘here’ and ‘now’ of viewing

Norman Bryson in the introductory essay to Mieke Bal’s book *Looking In: the art of viewing*, comments that it was feminist theorizing of the gaze which acknowledged that into the cinema

[Viewers] brought with them their deepest desires and anxieties, their whole history of having been socialized according to the specificities of gender and sexuality. (Bryson, in Bal (2001): 7)

Love Stories (2004), while complicating the public and private viewing spaces of museum and cinema also shifts the usual Albertian perspectival viewing position (as developed in theories of the gaze) (5), and demands that other considerations than active and passive polarities are being addressed in this work. *Love Stories* (2004), though structured like a diagram (see Appendix # 3), works in excess of opticality – it works as narrational.

In discourse, we speak from within fields of address; in narratives, we tell a *you* about a *him* or *her* or *they*. Narrative fields are faceted, polygonal, many voiced. The optical field, by contrast, knows only two sides (image, look), and in the end only one of these – the look – counts: the monologic and monolithic *I* of sight, poised forever opposite its Other, behind the proscenic frame.’ (Bryson in Bal (2001): 12)

In this way the work challenges and even has the possibility to reverse power relations which are limited in merely articulating the two-pole subject and object trajectory. (6)

Bryson goes on to describe Bal’s intervention in the power relations that the museum sets up where visitors are unable to answer back to the museological narrative. (7) He claims that Bal examines

the subjectivity that the museum calls into play. The invisible *I* of curational narration is unmasked or “undraped”. In place of a silenced *you*, Bal creates a *you* that vociferously, outrageously, answers back. And instead of focussing on the third person, her writing invents a discourse that bypasses the third person almost entirely. *I* and *you* are now by themselves, the display and its viewer alone in the gallery, intimately together: a discourse of seduction. (Bryson in Bal (2001): 17)

This is what I am anticipating for *Love Stories* (2004) in this gallery. Such a proposition for the artwork might allow for a 'here and now of viewing, at this one place' (8). Now the museum's proposition, which obscures the *I* and the *you* by speaking only of *them* (reducing the visitor to a passive receiver of this viewpoint, a constative function), can be overturned. The *I* and the *you* come into play so that:

The whole discussion shifts away from the "non-personhood" that characterizes third-person narratives (Benveniste), into the what one might call the *I:you* axis of *intimacy*. (Bryson in Bal (2001):18) (9)

In the same way, might *Love Stories* (2004) provoke the visitor to the Wallace Collection out of their passive position (spoken to about *them* – objectification), to allow a confrontation with an *I* to *you* exchange (as reversible directions)? The immediacy of this *I/you* proposition is instantly apparent in *Love Stories* – as soon as the viewer enters the space they are propositioned, enticed, and hopefully, seduced. This is possibly why those visitors who refused to engage with *Love Stories* (which demanded giving themselves up to the *I/you*), would usually stop dead in their tracks on entering the space (with a look of surprise and might I even say 'disgust'), then move on, sometimes even holding a hand to the side of their face in order to obscure the view of the work. In this way they were able to continue to 'survey' the expected/anticipated museum holdings of the West Gallery (as the "non-personhood" that characterizes third-person narratives).

There is also something quite transgressive now happening in this space which mixes the usual mode of museum visiting with the spectatorship of

cinema visiting. These are different modes of experience; the public visibility of the gallery punter strolling from one exhibit to the next (voyeuristically/disinterestedly?) is quite a different experience to becoming implicated in the viewing space.

My proposition for *Love Stories* (2004) is to make this connection for the viewer; the usual anticipated experience of the museum is confounded by this installation. To continue to insist on looking at the collection unchanged by the installation must have taken quite a bit of effort – the installation and its effect on the West Gallery must have to be met with a great deal of resistance in order to hang on to and insist on a particular singular viewpoint. (10)

6.3 An exchange 'between'; as fluid and affective

I have described my original idea for this work as based on a geometric diagram which proposed an orchestrated viewing space for the spectator placed centrally in a seat (the love-seat) which would face two ways – opposite two screens. I intended to construct, between the two screens, scenarios of an exchange between gendered positions that explore sexual difference in a way which might critique and undo fixed binary logic. The facing of one screen or the other (on the love-seat) for the viewer would involve them in this exchange too. In order for this exchange to be fluid and affective I decided that the images should be concerning loving encounters between couples. The work would enact possibilities for a relation always 'between' rather than fixed and oppositional, exploring desire and the affective as productive of heterogeneity and difference. Through the process of making

the work and through the actual viewing of the found film sequences I hoped to elaborate how such encounters with the artwork might include the viewer in the space and so become implicated in such an exchange. It is this proposition which is now central to this thesis; to create a practice which is an account of what it means to think change; to undo the static account of the self. I would need the imagery to be filled with erotic longing and desire in order to propose a more creative possibility for difference. Ideally the location for my work would be one which embraced and enhanced such possibilities; the West Gallery of the Wallace Collection (with its 18th-century collection) offered the perfect spatial proportions for my installation (as well as the feminine space of this particular gallery). Having had my proposal accepted by the Director of the Collection, my job was now to edit love-scenes (from movies) which would compliment and extend the paintings and objects in the gallery to propose an embracing sensuous fluidity of experience for the viewer.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

6.4 On becoming implicated; the feminine space of seduction and display

Love Stories (2004), as an installation in this gallery, invites you to take your place on the centrally placed love seat alongside Fragonard's *The Swing* (11) in order to experience a choreographed compilation of projected love-scenes (from several movies) onto the two screens (12). The love seat itself is a beautiful 18th century antique. (13). On taking your place you become implicated in the scene; you are placed in an intersubjective relation.

You are now central and become a part of the theatricality of this 18th-century space of seduction and display; part of its exaggerated sense of spectacle. It has propositioned you; you succumb (or not!) to the invitation to occupy the

central space in the gallery, the exact geometrical central location. It proposes precise/particular visual relations. The central place of the love-seat puts you literally in the picture; you become a part of the work: looked at and looking (see DVD #7), the work exists 'for-you and from-you, in the here and now of actual viewing' (14). But your looking is not one of domination and control; this seat is a love- seat and you have a partner, adjacent yet facing in the opposite direction.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view; love seat.

Your positions alongside each other mirror the screens which are placed equidistant from the central position which you now occupy; (the screens cut the room into two further equal sections). The action begins as you both enter into this continuous movement of projected image back and forth between the two screens; you and your partner (on the love-seat) are caught up in a

doubling/reversal/mirroring like that of a figure eight (Deleuze (1994): 100). Like the tango perhaps, where fluid mirroring movements and proximity of bodies involve the sexuality of the dancers.

This is a more complex scene than that proposed in Lacan's diagram of the gaze which demands a fixed and limited perspective/viewpoint, one which merely reflects the self. (15) From this position you are not reduced to a universal pre-personal individuation solidified in viewing processes; these involve the sexuality of the viewer, as fluid – this is not anyone and no-one. You may see all that surrounds you, but you are not its organising principle. The installation is carefully geometrically organised to place you centrally, yet what you give yourself up to is an endless intertwining/folding – a relation in which there can be no privileged 'view'; you are caught up in its flow of movement with its point of intersection located here on this love-seat. Like that of the Möbius strip; here two mutually defining and inter-implicating terms cross over in a certain reciprocity. It is exactly at the point of intersection (the site of the love-seat) that new possibilities for identity might be possible, one *with* the other. Your view is opened up, becomes like a double circle, back and forth and overlapping; endlessly, unlike that of the space of linear perspective. This doubling is doubled/reversed by your partner in the love-seat. The gaze is now revealed as impossible to master; there is nothing to control, only your actual physical position, here, in this 'now'. You are in the *I-you*. 'Now *you* are the source of the view: the work extends itself toward you, it embraces you.' (16)



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

Bryson goes on in his essay in *Looking in: the art of viewing*, to discuss *deixis*, the term used in linguistics to describe the 'here and now of utterance'

(Bryson in Bal (2001): 28) (17):

According to French linguist Emile Benveniste, who gave currency to the importance of deixis, the "essence" of language lies in deixis, not reference, because what matters in language is not the world "about" which subjects communicate, but the constitution of the subjectivity required to communicate in the first place. The pronouns "I" and "you", as opposed to "she", "he", "they", and the like, are totally empty in themselves. They do not refer outside the situation in which they are uttered. Each utterance is performed by an "I" and addresses to a "you". This second person is crucial, for it is that subject that confirms the "I" as speaker. Conversely, the "you" becomes an "I" as soon as the perspective shifts. It is only as (potential) "I" that the "you" him - or herself has the subjectivity to act, hence, to confirm the subjectivity of the previous "I". (Bal (2001): 217)

The essential feature of deixis is 'the reversibility, the exchange, of the first and second person.' (Bal (2001): 217) This is very pertinent to the relation set up by the love-seat and the screens; here is the possibility of a fluidity which

might scramble fixed perspectival positionings; here is a site where the politics of difference might be enacted.

I wonder, also, if, in complicating the spatial location of the viewers (on the love-seat), there is also a possibility of politicizing the notion of fluidity. Might such fluid spaces actually destabilize power relations between spaces and subjects? Is this what Judith Butler is proposing: a queering of power relations which constitute the subject in the social order (locations) that precede and place the subject?

6.5 An erotic enfolding; points of convergence

Your body is not still in this love-seat as you move your head to follow the action being played out between the two screens (the edited 'dialogue' between the two). Your glance also takes in and makes connections between the images on the screens and the objects in the room; connections are made again and again. The delightful to and fro of the swing with the woman as its central pleasurable focus (you are seated next to Fragonard's *The Swing*) mirrors your position on the love-seat. The pleasure of viewing is enhanced by the erotic and seductive environment of this museum. A historical distanced third person becomes overtaken as the deictic narrative embraces the *you* of your viewing. You become enfolded deeply into the complexities of your viewing experience as the 'points of view' sweep you up and carry you away. This is a sensuous, erotic enfolding; you are seduced. The figure-eight like movement into which you are embraced (and echoed by your partner on the love seat) not only swings your vision between the two screens but also outwards to include other objects and paintings in the gallery.

There are many points of convergence – the moment of the two loops crossing as in a figure eight - Bardot's gently swaying elegant provocative leg and foot (from Godard's *Le Mépris*, which I have edited into slow motion – as a repetitive movement) swerve off to connect with the foot and flying shoe in Fragonard's *The Swing*. Pure pleasure; visual movement which takes you beyond these scenes; you are transported; your self is dispersed. (See documentation of the exhibition in DVD # 7).



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Le Mépris*, Godard (1963). Video still.

The connections that are made are not only formal and spatial; there are also other levels of convergence which touch you, embrace you, in order to captivate you. The space which enfolds you is charged with an erotic longing. The film clips which I have so carefully chosen to compliment and extend the

seductive quality of the West Gallery's 18th-century works, are particularly luscious enactments of love.

The viewer, in-between the collection and the contemporary images on the screens, is enfolded between many and varied propositions. It is an erotic enfolding. Intimate links are made again and again, different each time. I/you/I/you/I/you/I/you. Scenes of intense demand and declaration of love unfold and intertwine across and between the screens and the paintings in the gallery. The two positions to be occupied on the love-seat may match the two sexed positions – as demand and declaration – yet there is a disregard for fixed possibilities (regardless of the sex); they remain forever exchangeable here - there remains a gap between them. This is not a regression to an either/or of these positions; here there is no such guarantee, only an endless oscillation between, without ever becoming/collapsing into the same. The light and colours of the gallery set the ambience. The gallery vibrates with the shifting, flickering light from the projectors; the screens in their size and height echo the paintings on the wall so that the images in the static paintings and on the moving screens animate each other. They are the most moving and beautiful I could find: Bardot is followed by Moreau, then Vitti and Mastroiani, Delon... Not only are their words excessive, touching, passionate, even tragic, but they are accompanied and woven together by Bach; tender words and gestures framed by emotive music. The gallery vibrates with them to produce yet another level which enfolds and even overwhelms the viewer in its affective capacity. Affect, as a force beyond, comes into play.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Le Mépris*, Godard (1963) Video still.

The exchange in the installation *Love Stories* (2004) embraces the historical display of the West Gallery and transports it into the present. The curators at the Wallace Collection had accepted my proposition for this exhibition precisely because of the connection made with the 18th Century display of the West Gallery; it intended to create a dialogue between this historical moment and the contemporary, particularly through an articulation of the feminine (to an extent that I had not anticipated. I had seen the gallery as a setting for my work but was surprised at the extent of the relationship which was set up between them). Artists such as Boucher and Fragonard intended to embrace and engage the viewer in a space of feminine spectacle and display not only to create glamour and pleasure for the spectator, but to propose the feminine as that which tames and refines masculine brutality. A feminine sensibility would be the hallmark of the cultivated subject at that time. Through a

heightening of the erotic and the sensuous (usually through a portrayal of the body of the woman as allegorical representations), Rococo artists would draw the spectator into the image in order to move them emotionally (an arousal of the passions), in order to induce greater harmonious feelings in the viewer. This vision of the refined, feeling subject could be represented and made accessible through the painting's sensual allure.

I am arguing for a more enabling idea/notion of subjectivity than the tragic destiny ever caught up in a relation to loss as outlined by Lacan (or for the 'taming' of the subject as intended by Rococo artists). To be forever in pursuit of an illusory idealized unity in an attempt to capture that coherence of bodily unity (which the Mirror Stage so tragically disperses), is alienating, as self/other distinctions remain problematic. This is a feminist project. I am proposing that (and investigating how) the artwork might enable a quite different dimension: of intersubjectivity, allowing an *I-you* exchange. In Lacan's Symbolic the *I* (as belonging to the Imaginary) is subsumed by the order of language as the third person: the *you* is addressed as *other* rather than as internal to *I*. I am following Bryson's claim for Mieke Bal's writing as re-addressing this problematic of Lacanian theorising by highlighting her interest in deixis: 'in *I-you* reciprocity, the address to the viewer, and painting's enfolding of the viewer's space, is a way of indicating what may be incomplete in Lacan's formulation of the Symbolic and the Imaginary as exhausting all possible positions the subject may take up in discourse.' (Bryson in Bal (2001): 35). *Love Stories* (2004) seeks to shift the visitor to the West Gallery (submitting to its 'constative' (18) address of the museal institution) out of their

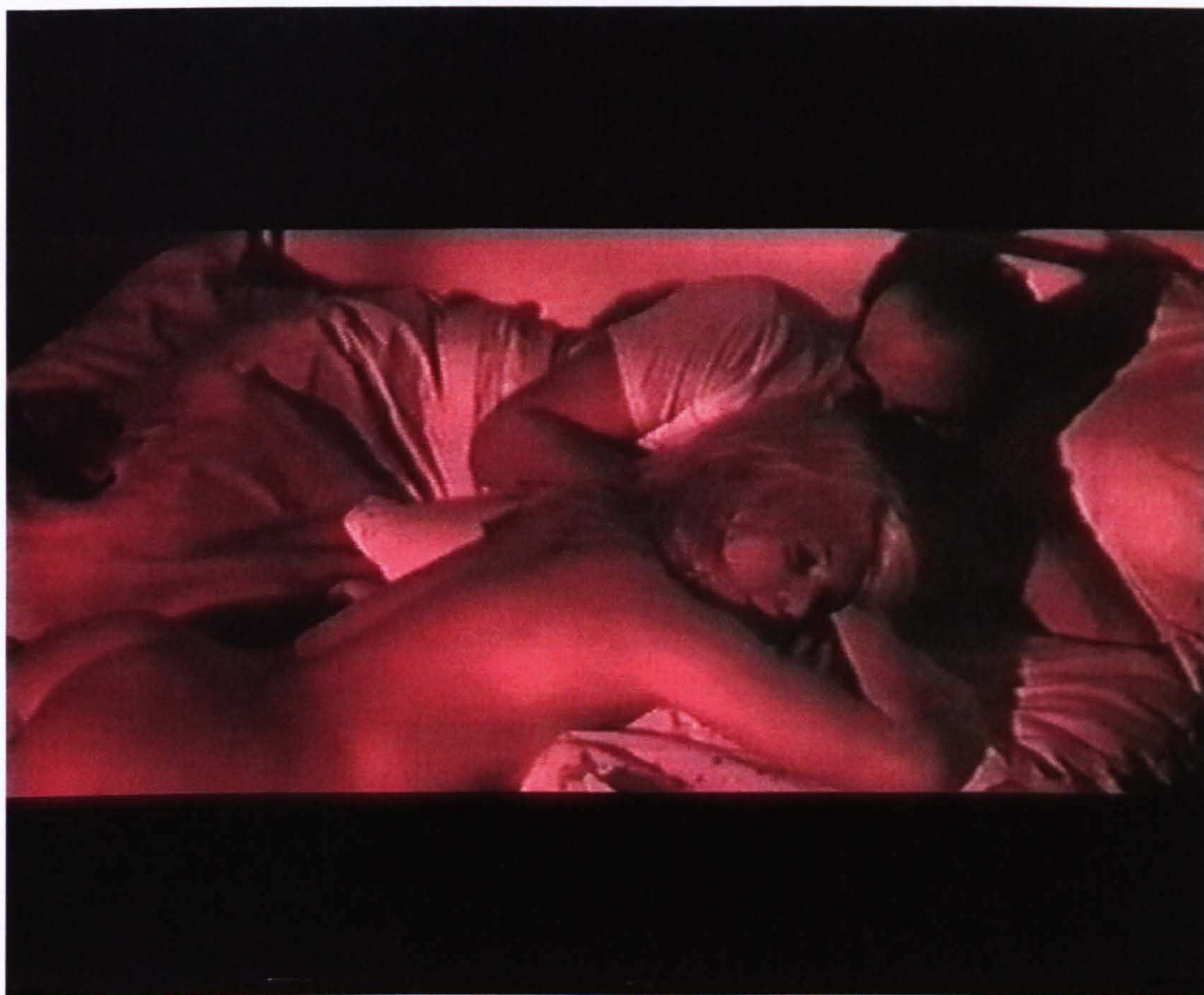
passive admiring gaze to become engaged through the act of looking by an activation of their own imaginative contribution. Narrativity becomes activated in the artwork. (19)

The viewer is caught up between the images on the two screens which are an ongoing, continuous display of a declaration, demand, and rejection of, love. The erotic nature of the images promote an 'embrace of the self, not in self-absorption, but in the exchange of the "I" and the "you"' (Bal (2001): 220), which undermines the notion of the erotic being understood as a tragic loss of self. The more positive outcome is experienced not through the images on the screens themselves, but rather in the viewing complexity staged by the installation: its narrativity. The gallery and its contents elaborate and extend these possibilities and becomes a stage for an exchange, a constant moving between.

Bal describes the deictic exchange in her description of David Reed's paintings. An exchange between the 'pullulating life' of the canvas as the 'first person' and the "'experience" of forms' by the viewer as the 'second person', so that 'the deictic exchange that occurs when this aesthetic "happens" is itself what initiates and structures the aesthetic.' (Bal (2001): 221) The exchange of the "I" and the "you" becomes the point of intersection in *Love Stories* (2004).

The whole gallery is put in motion. I have carefully regulated the light in the gallery so that the light from the screens does not dominate or exceed the

light needed to view the splendour of the gallery; the light from the screens even enhances the shimmer of the surface of the paintings as they are set in motion by the flickering light from the two screens.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Le Mépris*, Godard (1963) Video still.

You are deeply moved; you are enraptured by the emotion, the beauty of the faces/bodies, the settings for these scenes of affect. From your place on the seat you turn your head to follow the voice and the music which moves you across from one direction to the other; drawing and directing your gaze. Sometimes the screens show the same image – mirrored, opposite each other. Movements across the screens are repeated in the other to create a sideways shunting effect between them; you catch this out of the corner of your eye. To and fro, you are pushed and pulled as the story, which leads you

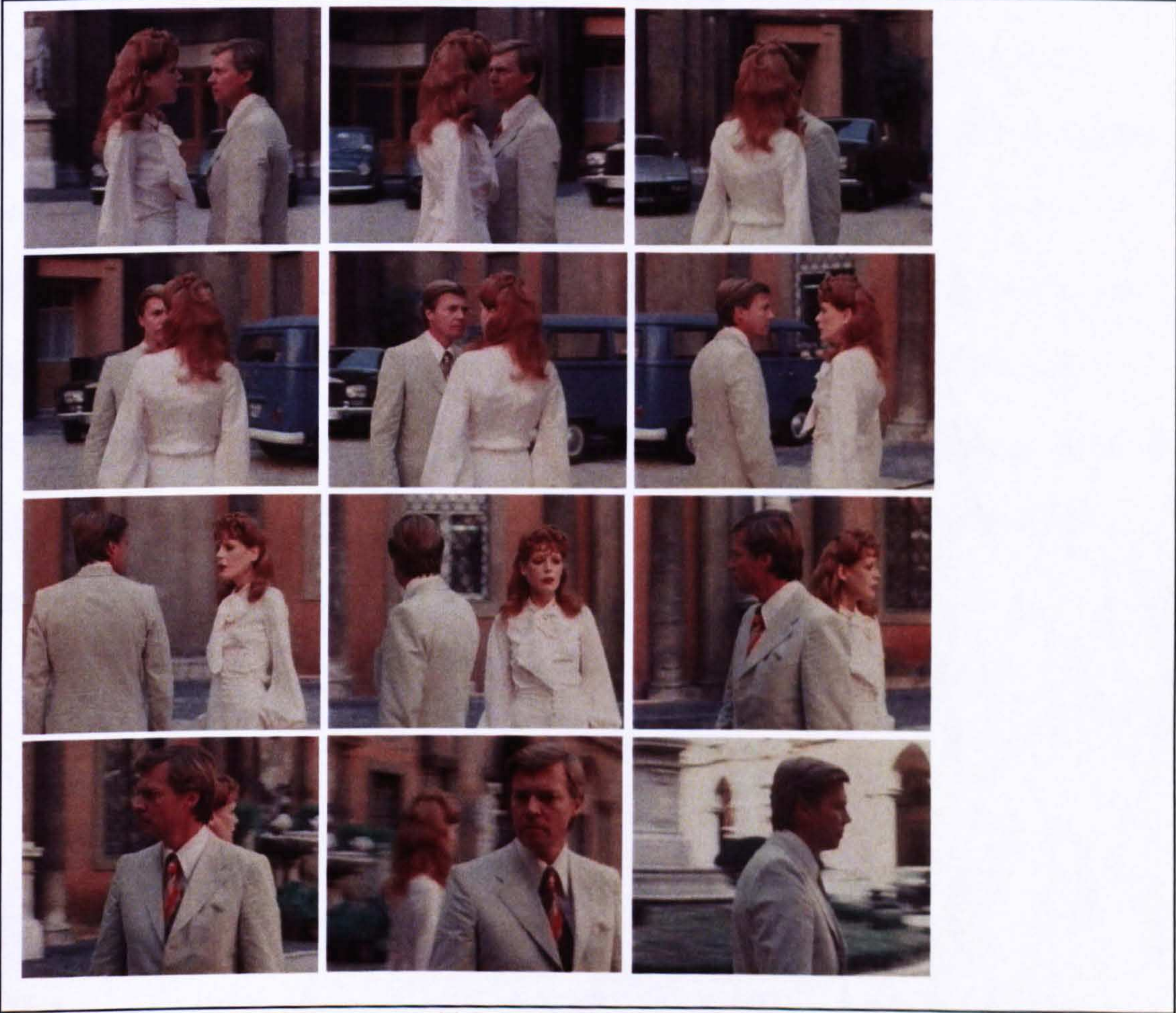
in a circular movement, carries you along as lines-of-flight (Deleuze & Guattari (1987): 298. One scene (film clip) slips easily into the next.

I have considered these sequences carefully in the slow and arduous editing process. Firstly, after many hours of identifying the scenes I have to dissect them between the two screens. The timing becomes crucial in this process; repetitions, playing with speed, shifting background music - all add to the emotional intensity and exchange which I intend to create between the two screens. It is often an instinctual process but my intention is to keep the movement and emotion in flow.

6.6 Being put in motion as disruptive of a stable self

You move on; you are caught up in Fassbinder's famous 360-degree camera shot where two lovers approach each other from opposite directions, meet, face, and circle each other at the same time that the camera incredulously encircles them – another doubling. (20) The images are mirrored on the opposite screens which you also turn 180-degrees in your seat so as to follow it. From right to left, from near to far, circling, in mirrored formation, you follow the endless movements. This scene is almost too complex in its intensity to analyse. We, the audience become bound up in the tension of this magnetic meeting by the extraordinary feat of the camera behind which we are placed as viewers. As it rotates at speed to embrace the couple in a circle it seems to bind them together with ourselves caught up in this off-screen space.

Fragonard's paintings made similar propositions for the viewer at the time, drawing you in to the movement and ambiance of seductive pleasure. The heightened colour in the paintings in the West Gallery, particularly the use of 'hot' colours by the 18th-century artists, intended to stir the emotions of the viewer and move them to ecstatic delight. (21) These connections: erotics, colour, shimmering light and movement, are made between the paintings and the screens; spontaneous and full of movement and light, vibrating – all surface: sheer erotic energy, shooting off in all directions to go beyond the merely seductive. This is not a taming of the viewer, but a putting in motion.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Martha*, Fassbinder (1973) Video sequence.

And then Vitti and Mastroiani (22): close-up on their faces which twist and turn; edited close-ups of kissing and stroking, almost writhing in the pleasure of their (what seems like, endless) tender playful embracing. Vitti's voice, quite soft and high pitched, murmurs 'Mio, Mio, Mio'. The image rolls between the two screens; you tumble and turn with the camera, close-up and intimate, almost a third partner in the embrace. Bathed in such bliss, you give yourself up to the experience. Rocked in the erotic rhythm of love, an embrace of the self as an exchange of "I" and "you" shifts you out of your usual (voyeuristic) position of mastery as the we/her as subject/object breaks down and is displaced. A folding and enfolding of the one with the other, and between you and the image – on an endless roll; where repetition is not that same old thing, but rather the possibility of something new. I have not only doubled the scene onto both the screens, but edited the original clip, extending and heightening the erotic movements by re-cutting the sequence and the speed so that it repeats in differing sequence on the two screens. The camera mostly focuses close-up on the face of Vitti; it is her ecstatic pleasure which is being tracked; though her lover Mastroiani's face is also scrutinised in the close-up by the camera – we almost see him from her angle.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *L'Avventura*, Antonioni (1960) Video still.

While this sequence rolls, the constitutive lack which marks the subject as a speaking being is dissipated. It is the stuff of Lacan's classic demand of the woman exemplified in Bernini's carving of St. Theresa (his *Encore* lecture); her *jouissance* is clearly portrayed on her face; it is her moment of ecstasy – 'about which nothing can be said' (according to the Master provoking several of his audience to respond later on with their own explorations of such 'impossibilities'). The hysteric's belief in sexual rapport is momentarily made real; momentarily her radical lack has been annihilated; bliss, *jouissance*, is made real. But it is momentary, that is why, in this scene, it seems an eternal embrace. According to Lacan, the hysteric (who always fails in relation to love) believes in love. In selecting the film clips I have had to reject Hollywood movies (apart from *Dangerous Liaisons* with Glenn Close and John

Malkovich). The image of the typical Hollywood screen goddess I realised would not convey the intimacy of the dramas acted out in these more avant-garde European movies. Though the stars of these movies are, for me, even more beautiful than Hollywood stars of the same period, they are possibly not as iconic as this might inhibit an intimacy. The women in the paintings in this gallery, as beauties of their day, are portrayed in exaggerated poses of heightened erotic display. A painting of Madame de Pompadour (a celebrated beauty of her time) by Bucher (1759) is displayed in the adjoining West Room (Lady Wallace's boudoir); it is surrounded by several depictions of Venus by Bucher.

The Bucher's are particularly erotic and sensuous, and it should be noted that Bucher particularly experimented with fluid notions of masculinity and femininity in the depiction of his subjects (for example *Jupiter seducing Callisto*). The proposition by 18th-century artists in the heightening of the feminine was purposefully to propose such spaces as harmonious and refined. The gallery also has two large octagonal display cases which contain many beautiful miniatures. The cases allow viewing at chest height – for close inspection; in order to view them the gallery visitor has to raise the green leather flaps (no doubt there to protect them from the light), which increases the voyeuristic gesture of the viewing taking place. Many of the images are of Venuses, titillatingly arranged for your pleasurable scrutiny.

My aim for *Love Stories* (2004) is for the viewer to be displaced from such voyeuristic positionings; the enjoyment of the woman here might allow

another relation to that traditional fixed relation. Might this shift from the old model be brought about by allowing movement; one which even moves past rather than beyond? A return is possible but with a different outcome: with no possible solidification within the image. Though initially seeming to embrace such seductive images, I intend this artwork as critiquing and re-evaluating traditional voyeuristic enjoyment.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant*, Fassbinder (1972) Video still.

For twelve minutes and thirty-seven seconds the play of light and colour produces a *performance* of the erotic; these choreographed 'scenes' enfold you, the viewer, in a sensuous dance. The beauty of the images, faces, clothes, interiors - are all part of the seduction. Your own fantasy becomes

invested in the ongoing staging of amorous display; you are a willing participant in this event.

The *work* of art, not as object but as effect, is not to be confined to the surface or skin, nor to one person or hand, but instead initiates an interaction that comes to full deployment in this grander fold, where the work envelopes the “you” that constitutes it. (Bal (2001): 229) (23)

From ‘participant’ in this scene you are now ‘enveloped’. The moving image (as cinema), can work to disrupt the illusory unity of the self (the body schema) by situating it outside the self and so be renegotiable; an intersubjective relation between the viewer and the artwork.

6.7 An active gift of love

It is not the aim of this artwork to try and locate any truth of the different positions for the sexes but rather to explore what the theme of love might enable for the viewer of the work. Kaja Silverman has the question of love as the basis for her book *The Threshold of the Visible World* (Silverman 1996), with her exploration of an ‘active gift of love’ (24). Here she formulates her theory of love in order to challenge existing systems of the identificatory process. Through rethinking idealization, ‘that psychic activity at the heart of love’, to propose that the aesthetic work can maintain ‘the gift of love in the form of a provisional bequest, and, thus, engages us in an active rather than a passive form of idealization’ (Silverman (1996): 2), Silverman argues against the psychoanalytic formula that there can be no relation between the sexes to propose ‘the terms under which precisely such a relation might be possible.’ (Silverman (1996): 41) (25) For Lacan, the subject, on perceiving his/her other (in the idealising image), responds to it by attempting to ‘close the gap between it and the sensational body, so as to assert the unity of the self.’

(Silverman (1996): 42) In *Seminar 1*, Lacan asserts the subject's desire to be one with the ideal image; a narcissistic relation. 'It's one's own ego that one loves in love, one's own ego made real on the imaginary level.' (Silverman (1996): 43) In opposition to this, Silverman is arguing for the possibility of a recognition of that other *as an other*, not as that which must be overcome. *Love Stories* (2004) evokes and explores such a proposition. By concentrating on the love-scene itself I am able to explore a recognition of the other as *other*; as a continuous state of *being*. In setting up the two screens opposite each other and editing the clips to cross over and between them, I allow for the possibility of a collapsing of binaries into a non-hierarchical order of change.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

It is the possibility though of forming a relation with the ideal image that cannot be assimilated as one's own (the subordination of the lover to the beloved) that allows a more profound and generous relation to love.

Silverman proposes therefore an *active* idealization of the other rather than the *passive* (problematic) idealization theorized by Lacan (Lacan (1977b): 72).

Yet Silverman acknowledges Lacan's description of an 'active gift of love', which is directed 'towards the being of the loved subject, towards his particularity' (Silverman (1996): 43). In this he perceives the other as a subject rather than the more usual: as an object, as an extension of the self.

This other subject is therefore separate from the self. Silverman, though, points out that this is as far as Lacan pursues this; he 'neglects to clarify the role played within this libidinal economy of the image.' (Silverman (1996): 73)

This now becomes relevant to my practice and is a real possibility for further feminist practices to pursue.

Silverman elaborates on Lacan's affective relation, 'the active gift of love', and proposes her own notion which exceeds the Lacanian paradigm (Silverman (1996): 73). She describes Lacan's passive identification as involving a misrecognition of 'the ideality which one has conferred upon the other as the other's essence' (Silverman (1996): 77) (in courtly love). An active gift of love concerns the subjects' libidinal affirmation of what is culturally valorised.

Lacan also says (*Seminar VII*) that it is through textual production that this process takes place; Silverman now proposes that it is through 'the creation and circulation of alternative images and words that he or she can be given access to new identificatory coordinates.' (Silverman (1996): 81) The purpose

of the artwork would therefore not be to perpetrate such self-identificatory models – to reaffirm the self – but to put us in a new relation to what might be possible – conducive to a heteropathic identification (rather than ideopathic identification). This then takes on political possibilities (which I have suggested earlier for *Love Stories* (2004)), that the subject as the subject ‘may be induced to occupy a subject-position which is antithetical to his or her psychic formation.’ (26)

Silverman also adds to this Benjamin’s definition of *Belehnung* (distance) – an exaltation involving desire, by which the drive towards possession would be averted:

He [Benjamin] characterizes the production of an inexhaustible and ultimately unconsumable beauty – a beauty which one can, as it were “loop” around but never incorporate – as the end result of such an exaltation. (Silverman (1996): 95)

I am not claiming that *Love Stories* (2004) works in this way; this definitely is *not* cinema. When the lights go up in the cinema, the ‘being elsewhere’, which has been possible in the dark space between the spectator and the screen, soon fades. This is a more complex identificatory process proposing that estrangement is never complete; though absorbed in the sensuous and emotionally moving space of this installation, one’s body as a viewer is still active in these spaces between. Although these images on the screens are identified as cinema (they are well known movies), they do not repeat that initial encounter: the identifications initially experienced in the auditorium of the cinema; the identification of the on screen narrative into one’s own imagination space is not completed here. Silverman’s project is ‘the elaboration of strategies for inhibiting the ultimate assimilation of the

unfamiliar to the familiar, for maintaining the alterity of the new corporeal parameters to which the spectating subject accedes.’ (Silverman (1996):102) She proposes that where the cinematic aura is not only foregrounded, but exaggerated, it will challenge the logic of self-sameness (where the viewer will only experience a narcissistic experience with no challenge to this tendency to incorporate the other). This would ‘prevent us from imputing to the recipient an essential or intrinsic ideality by bringing us to a knowledge of our own productivity with that ideality’. (Silverman (1996): 103) This then must be a conscious viewing experience. It is necessary to move then from this passive viewing position to an active one to allow for a genuine intersubjective relation.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

Though *Love Stories* (2004) projects luscious love scenes from particularly beautiful movies, the viewer of this artwork becomes aware of themselves as a viewer, able to be involved with the work actively; a transaction takes place which would equal Silverman's quest for artworks which are 'synonymous with what Benjamin calls "*Belehnung*," and Lacan calls "*the active gift of love*."'

(Silverman (1996): 105) Because the images are from the past, one has the knowledge of their history (allowing you a recognition, a familiarity); as significant films they are permeated with that certain value Benjamin attributes to the photograph. The paintings on the wall of the West Gallery add to this; one is drawn in, captivated by the familiar, seductive images and the enveloping emotions being played out, but one is aware that they are addressing you, the viewer, the visitor to the Wallace Collection; your viewing is being interrogated. (And is also a possible reason to resist the work as has been described by several visitors to this gallery). I say 'interrogated' but this is not an aggressive confrontation of the viewer.

This thesis acknowledges the work done in the 70's – particularly by such artists as Carolee Schneeman and Hannah Wilke (which made this challenge to the voyeuristic gaze of the viewer). (27) But the intention of this thesis is not merely to make the viewer conscious of their voyeuristic look (particularly in relation to the female body) but rather to propose an encounter with the artwork which enfolds the viewer as an active participant. It is therefore reciprocal in that one brings one's own questions – one is aware of one's own position. It is what I am aiming to explore and develop in this thesis. The 'feminine' space of the Wallace Collection is a perfect site for this proposition.

One is no longer in the hierarchical destructive binarism of you and me but a much more productive position opening up the unconscious to otherness, allowing a realignment of self and other; it is a productive encounter which rethinks gender hierarchies through the experience of the work. A re-working, repetition, of the love-scene in order to move us on.

Bal refers to Deleuze to describe the entanglement of subject and object (entangled in the folds) as embracing 'the reader within the narrative as a variable "you" who is fully dependant on, *and* constitutive of, its corollary, the "I".'

It [the state in which subject and object meet] is not exactly a point but a place, a position, a site, a "linear focus", a line emanating from lines. To the degree it represents variation or inflection, it can be called *point of view*. Such is the basis of perspectivism, which does not mean a dependence in respect to a pre-given or defined subject; to the contrary, *a subject will be what comes to the point of view*, or rather what remains in the point of view. (Deleuze (1993): 19 emphasis added, cited in Bal (2001): 232)

In *Love Stories* (2004) the viewer's gaze moves between the two screens, particularly following the flow of images from one to the other; back and forth, taking in the relation made to the objects/paintings in the West Gallery. This flow is both physical and psychic, between space and time, between real and virtual; an active synthesis moving in the direction of real objects at the same time as a passive reflective (psychic) synthesis moving in the direction of virtual objects. These overlap in the encounter with the work; actual and virtual move across and between, doubling and crossing over. Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, calls these series (virtual and actual) *objectales*; they are elliptic in relation to one another. In this the ego is situated at the crossing point of the flow from one synthesis to the other, described as a

figure “8”, where the two circles cross over – actual (real objects) and virtual objects. (Deleuze (1994): 100) Here also the intellect and instinct intertwine in this intersection of (asymmetric) circles and it is this very crossing over that Deleuze and Guattari mean by desire; it is not the desire of Freudian thinking which seeks to integrate into a whole. Desire is now understood as constantly transitive, resisting normalization and working outside of Freudian biological determinism. Desire here is not experienced in a relation to lack – not as a longing; desire can here be understood as enabling connections and relations – it is positive and affirmative – (an overturning of the Platonic tradition of desire). Desire now seeks nothing apart from its own expansion. This formula allows for the production of other possibilities (it is without a goal) which make endless connections. A separation between the one and the other is not possible; they are co-dependant, they borrow from each other and enrich each other. The editing of the film clips in *Love Stories (2004)* does not allow a resolution of either emotion or narrative; the images recur, cross over each other, make connections with other images in the Gallery. I have chosen them carefully to complement the seductive sensuous ambiance of the gallery and edited them to propose desire as expansive.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

The aim of this thesis is to propose the artwork as shifting the understanding of the self through an encounter which investigates how the fashioning of identity might be bound up in one's relation to the other. Against the dominant Hollywood portrayal of love as fulfilment, the happy ending, *Love Stories (2004)* addresses all the familiar themes of identification and stereotypical gender roles, but intends to produce a different outcome than the tragic account of subjectivity for the viewer.

My aim in selecting the film clips for *Love Stories (2004)* was to create an artwork which articulated a particular relation for sexual difference through the declaration, the language and emotion/erotics of love, the amorous economy between men and women (all the scenes are familiar exchanges by both

heterosexual and same-sex couples). It is as though we see the whole of cinema before us in this artwork. Maybe it is particularly so for my generation; these are faces/icons which informed my youth. (This is also important in the Heads pieces described in section 2.00). Watching these film clips, the movements, the unfolding of narratives, there is an uncanny resemblance, an intensity of a moment which is out of one's control. Like watching one's life: an uncanny repetition of that over which one has no power. The movies are recognisable – but that is not an issue, more an added pleasure of recognition. One's imagination runs along with the flow of the film-clips but not necessarily related to the content of the narrative. It is almost an infantile regression as one's own fantasy becomes entwined.

For Lacan, love is how the subject deals with the traumatic nature of the lack in him/her and the other and only exists in language. He proposes that there is no love outside of speech. Love emerges out of speech as a demand that is not linked to any need. He articulates a very different relation to desire for each of the sexes: the woman's (as hysteric) demand for completion and the man's response, which always fails. In *Love Stories (2004)*, declaration of love follows demand, follows rejection, on and on, so as to go beyond the Lacanian account in order to possibly construct another relation to desire.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Le Mépris*, Godard (1963). Video still.

The words appear on the screen as subtitles as well as through the speakers/sound system. Bardot demands of her lover (played by Michel Piccoli) an affirmation of her desirability (*Le Mépris*, Godard, 1963). Beginning with her feet she moves on up her body with the same question about the desirability of her ankles, knees, thighs, behind.... Between each demand she awaits his response. Then her hair: ‘Do you love my hair?’ Response: ‘Enormously’. Demand: ‘Which do you prefer, my entire breast or just the tips?’ Response: ‘I don’t know; both equally’. And then on again to her shoulders, face, “all of it: mouth, eyes, ears”, to end with the ultimate demand: ‘So you love me totally?’ which is met by the moving response: ‘Yes, totally, tenderly, tragically’. All the while the camera (tenderly) scans the naked body of Bardot; Piccoli’s body mostly obscured. The scene is accompanied by the

most repetitive short phrase of music which rises and falls in scale while keeping the same steady rhythm; the voice uttering soft words of love reinforced by this delicious musical refrain. It is an image and sound of ultimate longing. I have attempted though through re-locating this exchange within my artwork to elicit another relation to longing which isn't always tragic.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Le Mépris*, Godard (1963). Video still.

Godard is a true Lacanian with his fascination for the woman; the question of love is portrayed by masculine cowardice in strong contrast to the limitless feminine in an endless play of desire; a tragic relation. A true woman, according to Lacan, allows the man to show himself as the one who desires, 'because she assumes the lack and also the semblance that constitutes their game of lacking' (Jacques-Alain Miller in Salecl (2000): 21). The typical question of the woman being 'Do you love me?' and for the man 'I wonder if I

am loved'. (Which is maybe why Bardot – the most desired woman of her day, in her narcissism, ended up only able to love animals – so disappointed was she with the man's response to her demand!).

Can there be another relation which *Love Stories* (2004) might propose? Other possibilities or understandings which might be explored through this artwork?



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Le Mépris*, Godard. Video still.

Lacanian theory claims that there is no end to this impossible exchange; 'there is no solution as such, and we remain in the realm of what does not stop being written' (Paul Verhaeghe in Salecl (2000): 150).

Renata Salecl explains the Lacanian account of love in *(per)versions of love and hate*: (1998)

The enactment of love is how the subject deals, on the one hand, with his or her own lack, and, on the other hand, with the lack in the loved one. As such, love does not call for an answer, although we usually think it does: "Since men have been writing about love, it is clear that they survived far better the longer the beauty remained mute, the longer she did not answer at all – which provokes the thought that the discourse on love itself engenders a kind of *jouissance*, a *jouissance* of the speech itself". (Michel Silvestre, *Demain la psychoanalyse*, Paris: Navarin Editeur 1987: 300-301). (Salecl (1998): 18)

Love also is said to 'address the point in speech where the word fails.' (Salecl (1998): 18) It is what is left out of the process of symbolization and linked to *jouissance*.

The demand and declaration of love in these film clips is often painful yet compelling. A tragic declaration in the scene from *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Fassbinder, 1972) is witnessed as harrowing. It is an impossible relation. In other clips from this movie we watch the narcissistic Petra discussing her feelings about her lover while putting on her make-up. We have a doubling of her image in the mirror, watching her watch herself. On the opposite screen I place the close-up face of the friend Sydonie in slow motion; we watch her watching Petra. In so doing am I able to shift this impossibility to one which might be experienced now, in motion, rather than as a tragic return in this context of *Love Stories* (2004)?



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant*, Fassbinder (1972). Video still.

Lacan defines love in terms of a narcissistic exchange between the subject and one who is the object of his/her love. It is the place from which the subject observes him/herself in the way he/she would like to be seen. This positioning reflects the lover's desire that the beloved return love, thus subjectifying him/herself as a lover too. (Salecl (1998): 14)

in the relationship of the loving and the loved, two different logics are at work. First, the loving one perceives in the other something that he or she does not have – the object *a*, which Lacan also names the *agalma*. The loving one therefore falls in love presupposing that the loved one possesses this object, something that is in him- or herself. And the second logic concerns the loving subject's desire to become the object of love for the loved one. (Salecl (1998): 46)

Lacan describes love as a tragic affair; 'the subject gives to the other what she or he does not have'. (Salecl (1998): 14) Love can be taken to enact the place of the object *a*; the 'stain' on the screen of reality – the point from which I cannot see, that which eludes me; it is an impossible relation. It needs to be

repeatedly spoken, one never arrives. Yet isn't there a more expansive experience/account for this 'tragic' relation which is played out quite differently in *Love Stories* (2004)? There are no answers, no self-knowledge made final, only a possibility of exchange with the other at a level in excess of what can be said, that it must 'not stop being written.' Is there a possibility of an exchange which happens in the actual experience of the artwork which proposes a more enabling and expansive account of one's subjectivity? The artwork undoes any possible attempt at a truth of one's self – the attempt to fix and stabilise the self – and set it in motion.

An attempt at an understanding of the psychoanalytic theories of the dynamics at play in the love scene is not really what is in question for the viewer of this work. First of all, Bardot, (or rather the character which she plays), is not putting herself up for scrutiny as the typical hysteric. Bardot is an image with both a huge screen and celebrity identity; she is the sex kitten par excellence, the identificatory symbol of women in the 1960's. And her partner played by Michel Piccoli has a similar symbolic identification for his generation. *Love Stories* (2004) intends to involve the viewer in a highly visual, aesthetic experience which is extended in the relationship it makes with the West Gallery Collection which is full of seductive charm and erotic intrigue. This is not a clinical case study but a highly erotically charged and very moving scene depicted by a magical film maker (Godard, in this case) who knows how to generate identification from his audience. Scene upon scene of enactments of love as 'cinema', as an art form which we are all used to experiencing as highly pleasurable spaces of fantastical identification, unfold and are repeated in this museum. But *Love Stories* (2004) is an

artwork, not cinema; the viewer can never lose sight of the actuality of this installation and their own position as viewer. This is an aesthetic encounter with an artwork and one typically allows oneself to be touched and moved by the experience. It is above all experienced as an encounter *between*. Love as narrative possibilities; an identificatory vehicle.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

6.8 The libidinous as against the economy of procreation and bourgeois marriage

The stories of love enjoyed in this installation are purely libidinous and are against the economy of procreation. The viewer is caught up in an amorous, erotic loving encounter between two singularities which is not directed at marriage and children (with its demand for absolute consummation). The

embracing of the viewer allows an interacting which is fluid and enfolding, repetitive and productive of affect. This is not an enactment of a command of the Law. The process of sexuation enacted here is related to desire, fantasy and *jouissance*. It is intended to be disruptive of the social order; to open up the gap in the symbolic accentuating the fact that phantasy is always at play. In the artwork, in the theme of love, might we find a self that is in flux and not submitted to the law?

One has to, in the first place, be willing to give oneself over to the artwork – to be willing to be seduced – to give up one's assumed account of oneself. (Which might account for the viewers who refuse to engage with this work – as described earlier; maybe they have too much to lose!) So the viewer is mobilised in this installation; s/he is moved. One allows oneself to be carried away, enchanted by that which cannot be spoken. One is held spellbound. In a short clip from *Identification of a Woman* (Antonioni 1982), I have deconstructed the editing of a complex scene between the two lovers where she declares her love. Asking her to repeat the declaration: 'You are my love', he moves off screen. On opposite screens I now enhance the feeling of desolation and split between the man and the woman by placing on one screen this image of the man walking away from the camera (the 'us' of viewing) while on the opposite screen I simultaneously show the image of the woman moving towards us. I then cut to the same image on both screens of them framed by a window, backs to camera. She turns to utter a heart rending declaration: 'You are my love. You are my celebration, my New Year, my cocaine. You are so many things'. Outside the window is a turbulent scene of

frantic seagulls. The woman's voice is full of passion; it is a tragic refrain, yet it is full of promise. As viewer you have turned from one screen to the other, opposing, then harmonious.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Identification of a Woman*, Antonioni (1982). Video still.

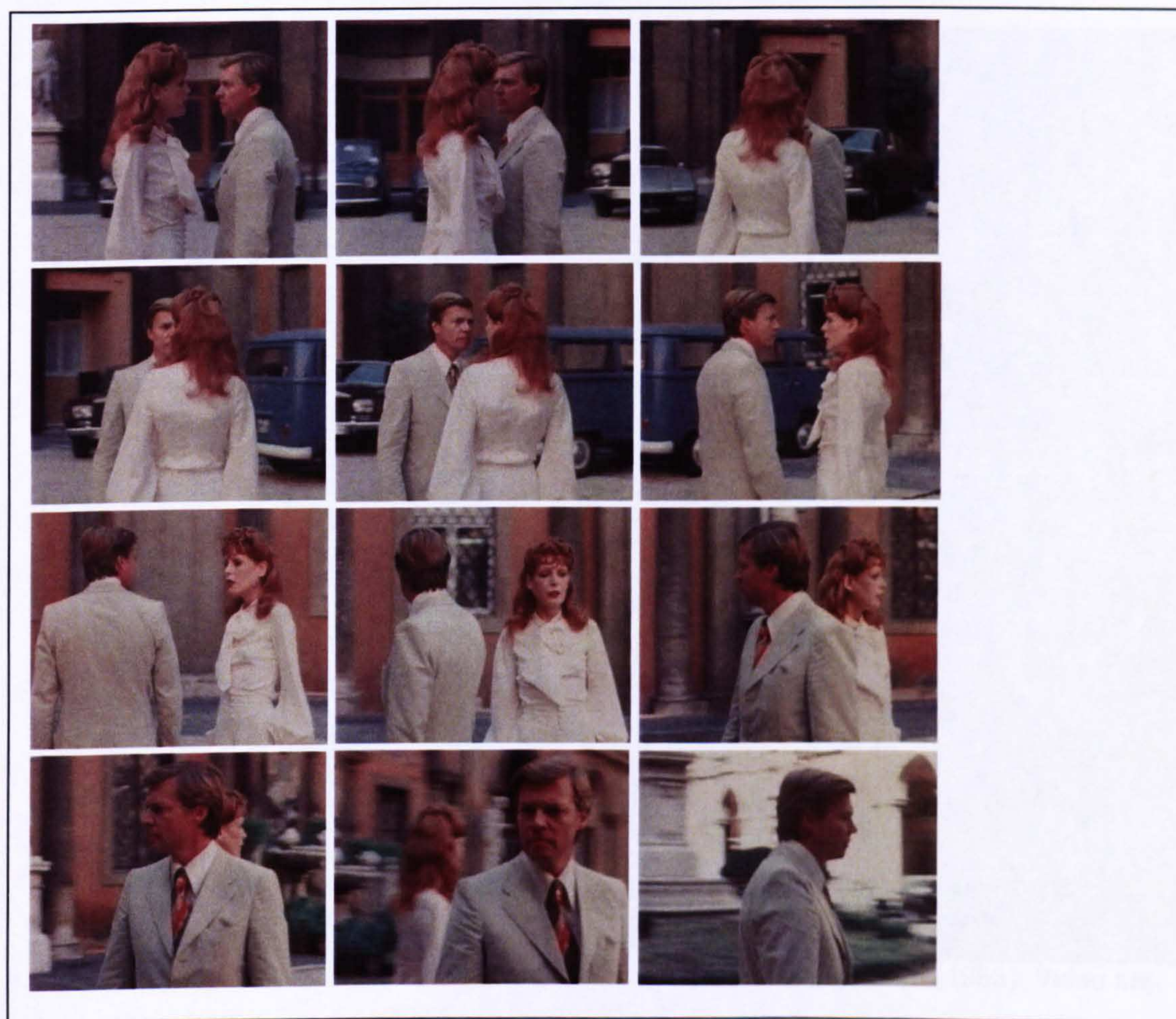
This scene, taken out of the cinema into the artwork (the museum, in this particular installation), provides an opportunity not only to be moved emotionally, but to frame that experience intellectually so that it might be productive of a reframing of the Self.

Encounters as those proposed in *Love Stories* (2004) are not to repeat the stories that we already know, which in the case of love would have us reduce it to the already known form of bourgeois marriage. Here, the issue of 'love' is not one of the familial (same-sex or heterosexual) but is a concept that is

open to the possible. This is not the study of the couple but rather an exploration of that which is possible to *be*. This artwork presents love as an encounter between the divergent worlds of lover and beloved that (like Deleuze's project) work outside of the regime of lack and negation. For Deleuze, desire is positive and productive, and not a yearning for what has been lost. While this artwork is evocative of loss, the effect of the work is to produce for the viewer new possibilities. The viewer of this work is not returned to static fixed positions but is presented with a fluidity which is experienced visually, physically, emotionally and psychically. All possibilities remain in flux – there is no resolution. Issues of longing and desire are not resolved as a tragic static account but are kept in flux, as an oscillation *between*. The editing of the film clips I have chosen and how I have set up a dialogue between the two screens intend to allow this fluid encounter for the viewer of the work

I propose a recognition in *Love Stories (2004)* of an exaggeration of already displaced sequences through the eye of the camera, exaggerated again by the play between the two screens. Even more competing viewpoints are possible: mirroring of sequences, reversal and repetition of different angles, liberating a sequencing of images from any single observer. I have intensified the connections, editing and sequencing images in order to disrupt expected outcomes for such scenes – liberated from the structure of everyday life. To relocate the famous 360-degree camera shot, from Fassbinder's *Martha* described above, and mirror it on the two screens in this gallery, is to see movement itself as outside of any possible viewpoint; we get to experience a

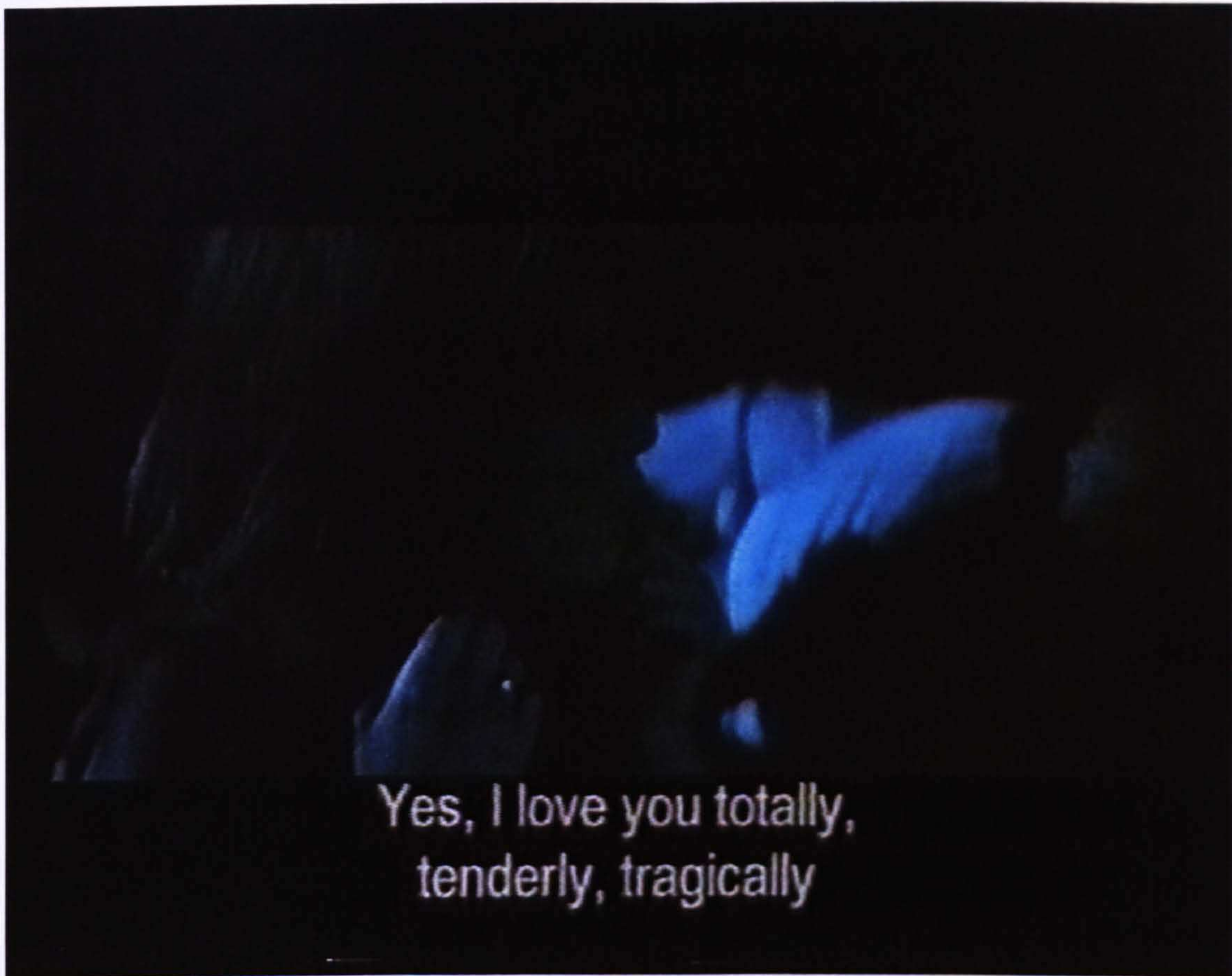
complex direct image of time and movement with ourselves caught up in its impossible flow, unable to locate a stable position for ourselves.



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Martha*, Fassbinder (1973). Video sequence; stills.

Love Stories (2004) allows an experience of the work as physical: visual and emotional. It is my intention that the viewer be embraced in an affective 'scene' which we give ourselves over to (unless we refuse this artwork – as I have already acknowledged); the work happens to us, we are moved; emotions, deeply felt, in a space of enchantment. Life is what happens to you;

you are mobilized through all your senses – body, stomach, heart, head, – something more than you can ever know is what you open up to here. You are drawn in with the work – an affective response that is prior to any decision, any logic – you give yourself up to it; like being in love. (28)



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) *Le Mépris*, Godard (1963). Video still.

Is there, in *Love Stories* (2004), a proliferation of intensities which destroys the image of a unified viewing position intent on reducing experience to meaningful order? Might one, in the encounter with this installation, give oneself over to the erotic power of emotion and sexuality, so strongly and movingly conveyed in this compilation of beautiful images which roll over and through us, in this sensuous space? Are our faculties eschewed and scrambled by our affective responses? Here is a flow of movement which sweeps in the shape of a figure 8, back and forward, a curving and crossing

over of differing and divergent elements; all our pasts, all our futures. Might we here encounter a divergent becoming – a continuous movement from one to another which does not eradicate difference but overlaps and intertwines, undoing the work of repression, of opposition, of hierarchy, of the repressive law of the father? To undo the illusion of this pre-given whole. Time can become a virtual whole of different divergent durations so that 'we can be freed from this illusion of a homogeneous, linear and undifferentiated time [...] by thinking of time as an intensive flow.' (Colebrook (2002): 42, discussing Deleuze)

It is my intention to consider the artwork as an enabling encounter – one which seeks an alternative outcome for the subject than that tragic relation to loss articulated by dominant philosophical and psychoanalytic theories. I am particularly concerned in this thesis (both in the practice and the accompanying text) to pursue research which does not return us to the singular perspectival relation to representation. This is necessarily a feminist investigation featuring 'the feminine' and desire as central issues to find a way to rethink bodies outside of the male-female binary. Elizabeth Grosz, in particular, has opened up possibilities outside the restrictive Freudian account of sexuality and difference. She turns to Deleuze and Guattari, because of their conceptualising of sexual difference, outside of the 'regime of the One, the self-same, the imaginary play of mirrors and doubles, the structure of binary pairs in which what is different can be understood only as a variation or negation of identity.' (Olkowski (1999): 55) 'And to this end Grosz acknowledges the necessity of conceptualizing difference outside of identity,

opposition, analogy, and resemblance in order to produce a concept of multiplicity that is not just the pluralized identity of liberal political conceptions of pluralism.' (Olkowski (1999) 55) Desire can now be understood not as a longing for something that is lost, as lack, but rather as a positive force which creates connections and relations. It is necessary therefore to think about what an artwork *does*: it is an affective dimension.

6.9 Love as amorous spending

In 1988, Irigaray wrote a foreword to her book *Elemental Passions*; it ends with this paragraph:

Women and men can only be wed beyond an already defined horizon. An other sunrise, an other relation between nature and culture, a new human identity, all this is necessary for both to agree to nuptials between microcosm, macrocosm and god(s).

At the furthest extreme of love, it is a question of the divine. Because we are not God(s), individually or together, love has become sorrow, degradation or enslavement. A love between the sexes, in which natures and gods are united and fertile, is essential to the discovery of an individual and collective happiness, one which is both empirical and transcendental. (Irigaray 1982)

Her writing is productive of an engaging and enabling relation which rethinks loss and the site of the feminine. It is evocative of Deleuze's transversal becoming – the one and the other intersecting in a continuous figure 8 (his becoming-animal) – that doesn't allow a reduction to the same, but allows a flow between, both thrilling and traumatic, as continuous. Such encounters allow another kind of connection between the sexes – a crossing of each other - as productive. *Love Stories* (2004) intends to produce an experience for the viewer of affects and intensities (a Deleuzian intention), rather than a quest for meaning. This intersection of the one with the other is echoed again and again in this installation: the museum and the contemporary installation; the viewing positions; the two screens; the lover and the beloved. The aim of

this thesis – of the practice and the writing for this PhD – is to investigate a more enabling possibility for difference, one which does not hierarchise. The possibility therefore of an encounter between two distinct *becomings* which, in crossing, at the moment of encounter, of touching each other, combine to produce other possibilities, narratives, phantasies. The possibilities produced by these intersections or encounters allow for new becomings; not to overcome what is other than the self, but to transform oneself into perceiving difference; an openness to life, that creates connections and relations. Such an aim is to unsettle the typical Western representational schema which proposes that experiences are read as signifiers of an original scene. Desire as a longing for a lost origin, displaced or repressed through substitutions and images is replaced by a more positive possibility. This would present the image itself as desirable and affective. It offers a new way of thinking for the subject away from the Freudian account through which experiences are understood as referring to some original scene of traumatic loss and separation (his Oedipal crisis). The subject can now be understood in positive terms rather than constituted in a relation to some mythological longing for lost origins of wholeness and completeness of a unified self.

For Deleuze and Guattari, art and literature are important for what they produce and for the possibility for allowing transformations; i.e. they are not to be read for a meaning, for what they represent, but for an opening up to what is not itself and to enable new perceptions and new worlds. Though the clips of love-scenes in *Love Stories* (2004) can be read tragically, as failed attempts to regain the whole of some primal, whole subjectivity, the installation itself proposes a more expansive possibility to the viewer through

the experience of the artwork. There is an enjoyment of the space itself produced by this installation within this Collection; there is intensity of movement, physical and visual, and also at another level - of a moving of emotions between and across, of overlappings and enfoldings, of the one with the other in an affective interplay and exchange which carries the viewer with it. Love itself is exposed as an exchange of possibilities and not as some tragic longing, in search of some ultimate fulfilment. Here we are open to intensities going nowhere, not seen from an already organised position; here are the possibilities to new becomings.

6.10 A doubling of desire

Desire can now be conceived of differently. Desire (according to Deleuze) is not about or reducible to sexual relations between persons; it is beyond the regulations of the law.

In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Luce Irigaray proposes to rethink desire not 'on the basis of observations of a moment of tension, or a moment of history (Irigaray, (1993a): 8), but rather, 'desire ought to be thought of as a changing dynamic whose outlines can be described in the past, sometimes in the present, but never definitively predicted.' (Irigaray (1993a): 8) She proposes a doubling of desire (in the encounter between the sexes) which produces a 'double loop in which each can go toward the other and can come back to itself.' (Irigaray ibid: 9) And so, in constructing another relation to difference, Irigaray advocates, proposes, that we need to 'construct an ethics of the passions' to allow for 'a relationship between two loving subjects of different sexes' where they each occupy different places unable to be occupied by the

other as they must remain 'irreducible one to the other' (Irigaray *ibid*: 12-13). Irigaray states that she can never know 'who or what the other is', nevertheless she is referring continually (and insistently) to the other here as 'the one who differs from me sexually' and she is interested to pursue this encounter between the two sexes as a space of wonder which maintains a 'space of freedom and attraction between them, a possibility of separation and alliance.' (Irigaray *ibid*: 13)

Irigaray claims that it is love 'that leads to knowledge, whether in art or more metaphysical learning. It is love that both leads the way and is the path. A mediator par excellence.' (Irigaray (1993a): 21) She claims that as a mediator, love allows for an encounter and the 'transmutation or transvaluation' between the two; it is always in movement and in a state of constantly becoming. (Irigaray *ibid*: 21) Love is an intermediary between opposites and serves as a third term between them; an interval. (Irigaray *ibid*: 28) (29) For Irigaray, female sexuality is always working this position; to work the one and the other with *wonder* as the primary passion, which has no opposite:

Wonder would be the passion of the encounter between the most material and the most metaphysical, of their possible conception and fecundation one by the other. A third dimension. An intermediary. Neither the one nor the other. Which is not to say neutral or neuter. The forgotten ground of our condition between mortal and immortal, men and gods, creatures and creators. In us and among us. (Irigaray (1993a): 82)

Like Irigaray, *Love Stories* (2004) seeks to find a way out of the impossible relation each sex has to the question of love. Typically, the incompatible utterances in *Le Mépris* (30) '[...] represent two unequal parts of the world that are capable neither of exchange nor of alliance.' (Irigaray (1993a): 135) In

Love Stories (2004), I have re-edited this section of *Le Mépris* between the two screens and between the screens and the gallery paintings (I have already mentioned the possible connection between Fragonard's *Swing*) so that it might allow for a shift in an understanding of what is being enacted between them (the lovers) to allow for the possibility of an intermediary position – as a relation *between*. The 'I' and the 'you' is reworked by Irigaray to produce a possible meeting between the sexes (who she claims, have not spoken to each other since the first garden). In 'The Fecundity of the Caress' (Irigaray (1993a): 30), she proposes that sensual pleasure in the form of the caress allows an immersion 'in that which does not yet have an individualized form' and opens up pathways to 'the mystery of the other'. (Irigaray (1993a): 189)



Love Stories (2004). (Two screen video installation) Installation view.

The mystery of relations between lovers is more terrible but infinitely less deadly than the destruction of submitting to sameness. Than all relationships of inclusion or penetration which bar the way to that nourishment which is more intimate than all others, which is given in the act of love. (Irigaray (1993a): 191)

6.11 Pleasure

Love Stories (2004), like Irigaray's claim, proposes that to enter into sensual pleasure – which goes beyond the limitations of language – is to go beyond the demands and declaration of the lover and the loved one. Each gives themselves up and moves into the abyss (Irigaray (1993a): 194). Though still separate in their positions as lover and beloved, there are other possibilities for the relation with the other.

For Irigaray, the sexuate other is embraced but not appropriated or subjugated; rather, the encounter has a positive outcome.

To arrive at the constitution of an ethics of sexual difference, we must at least return to what is for Descartes the first passion: wonder. This passion has no opposite or contradiction and exists always as though for the first time. Thus man and woman, woman and man are always meeting as though for the first time because they cannot be substituted one for the other. [...] This feeling of surprise, astonishment, and wonder in the face of the unknowable ought to be returned to its locus: that of sexual difference. [...] It does not try to seize, possess, or reduce this object, but leaves it subjective, still free. (Irigaray (1993a): 12-13)

Irigaray is not just addressing 'the heterosexual matrix' (as suggested by Judith Butler) but has a wider aim; she also explores the fecundity of the community 'between-women' which remain outside the domain of the masculine. (Irigaray (1993a): 178) And it is 'wonder' in particular which marks the difference and the unknowability of this other. Irigaray describes a *jouissance* of sexual corporal pleasure 'which allows for temporary proximity and demands involvement without annulling self-identity.' (Zylinska (2001):

75) For Irigaray, wonder 'evoked by the appearance of the other results from the strangeness of that other mixed with erotic sensation, previous memory of the joint experience of the motherly flesh and the promise of mutual recognition and closeness.' (Zylinska (2001): 75) With this description, Joanna Zylinska (in her thesis on the female sublime) is following Irigaray's aesthetic experience as an opening up of an ethical space.

In *Elemental Passions*, Irigaray describes through poetic language such encounters. In it she shifts the passive female beloved into an active partner in the encounter. Her prose is erotic, deeply moving, though sometimes dangerous: leading into the abyss (one which is not the void, but is differentiated). It is both pain and pleasure, it gives itself up to the flood of desire and opens itself to affect; one becomes vulnerable, risking annihilation and eternal dissatisfaction. Unlike capitalist exchange though, these encounters have no gain in reaffirming the self; this is an exchange where love is a gift with no expectation of fulfilment. This is an acknowledgement which does not reduce difference to sameness, but seeks to open the subject up as a question so as to approach the issue of difference, which breaks through fixed definitions. (Zylinska (2001): 32)

A sexual encounter is initiated by the other's call and established by the self's response to it. As a consequence, both the other and the self can emerge as separate and different, though never ultimately fixed, entities. By opposing the dialectical logic of capitalist exchange, the 'economy of desire' regulating this encounter remains open to the untamed and insubordinate circulation that can always be interrupted by some form of either excess or loss. (Zylinska (2001): 88)

Here, Zylinska is describing Derrida's notion of the gift (Zylinska (2001): 31), which he insists must not circulate nor be exchanged, but must remain

unspeakable. She argues that the feminine sublime 'deprived of the promise of the other's arrival, is inscribed in the unexpected, even violent, logic of donation and generosity that the gift calls for'. (Zylinska (2001):89) The promise of bliss and fulfilment offered by the gift of love then can overcome the fear of nothingness which is related to giving as an exchange, as debt and gratitude; a gift of love then has a certain risk, it is dangerous, it has no such guarantee as it works outside this capitalist system of exchange. Zylinska argues that such a gift demands an ethical response to the other. It is an 'amorous spending' which upsets the development of a sexual encounter which would have as its goal a demand for absolute consummation and gain as in matrimony and family genealogy. *Love Stories* (2004) similarly is not involved in such an account of love; it is excessive in its spending; it is libidinous, fluid and without finality; it is an 'economy of infinite spending', and so 'calls for a rethinking of the gender laws which underwrite it.' (Zylinska (2001): 91) In giving oneself over to the pleasurable experience of the installation, might such theorizing be in actual practice?

Feminist theorizing has proposed women's pleasure as working against the phallogentric system of exchange; it is a pleasure which produces a flow which 'exceeds the masculine economic exchange.' (Zylinska (2001): 93) Cixous and Irigaray both propose a practice which exceeds and undoes such goals. These are manifest in sexual encounters; encounters which are ungraspable.

I will never say often enough that the difference is not one, that there is never one without the other, and that the charm of difference (beginning with sexual difference) is that it passes. It crosses through us, like a goddess. We cannot capture it. It makes us teeter with emotion. It is in this living agitation that there is always room for you in

me, your presence and your place. I is never an individual. I is haunted. I is always, before knowing anything, an I-love-you. (Cixous (1994: xviii.)

Irigaray describes 'a fecund exchange between the sexes'. In *Elemental Passions*, she explores the relation between lovers as one of a crossing over of difference in wonder, pleasure and excessive pleasure, which cannot be reduced to an exchange of prescribed goals. This is an encounter between the two within an affective framework of unequal reciprocity which undoes certainty and notions of patriarchal reciprocity. Might I claim this as the encounter which is at play in *Love Stories* (2004)? That the encounter with an artwork might mirror the work of love; a love, that is, which can be, conceptualised outside of the regime of patriarchal exchange, to form new creative possibilities which acknowledge the 'ungraspable difference of the other.' (Zylinska (2001): 106) (31)

Love Stories (2004) presents the moment of the encounter as allowing some kind of negotiation, where uncertainty and lack become realigned. To venture into such an encounter is to trace the boundaries of the self and the other, to lovingly embrace the other while maintaining a distance which allows for a relation as truly giving; it asks for nothing in return nor for certainty or self-knowledge. To open up to the other, to allow an encounter, a crossing over of the one with the other, an engagement and creative response, might allow for a dialogue of difference as non-oppositional; sensuous and expansive, this is a new relation to gender as beyond hierarchical (traumatic and fixed) oppositional positioning. It shifts from an account of sexuality (problematic or

not) to one where the viewer is open to a re-negotiation with questions of otherness and difference that underpin any notions of identity.

Notes

1. The West Gallery contains one of the most important collections of French 18th-century paintings in the world as well as several pieces of furniture made for Marie-Antoinette and display cases of exquisite miniatures dating from the 16th- to 18th-centuries.

2. Though this installation had been advertised, this was the first time that The Wallace had shown contemporary artworks.

3. The Director and Head Curator of the Wallace Collection had made a list of conditions for this project in order to make sure that they did not contravene the bequest of Lady Wallace. Their main concern was that my work should have a direct relation to the Collection. Other concerns were mostly practical in order to safeguard the priceless items in the West Gallery, but one of them was to preview the material that would be the subject matter of the contents of the video; they were concerned about the erotic nature of the piece and were aware that children would be part of the public (though they clearly stated that they had no intention to censor the work). They were equally surprised at overheard negative remarks from some of the visitors and rushed to check the complaints box whilst loudly asserting that they had no hesitation in defending their decision to approve the installation as it truly added to and made a direct relation to the collection. The work clearly challenged significant issues about viewing which we had not anticipated (and which I will therefore explore in this section of writing).

4. Norman Bryson describes how it was initially feminist film theory which raised the question of the function of spectatorship. Art history still followed mainly the line of Michael Fried's Account in *Absorption and Theatricality*, where 'the viewer seemed not to be addressed at all, but entered the scene as an invisible, undetected observer'. (Bryson in the introductory essay in Bal (2001): 7). Several visitors to the Wallace seemed reluctant to give up such a role!

5. Laura Mulvey's seminal work *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1985) as crucial.

6. Bryson (in championing of Bal's essay) follows the French linguist Emile Benveniste's proposition that there are three persons to be accounted for. The third person [] is different from the others. *I* and *you* are directions, or vectors, inside the discourse where these words appear – they exist there and only there. But the third person stands outside the discourse. The third person can be referred to in his or her absence (like a tree). Not only *can* third persons be talked about when they are not there, they are permanently and logically absent from the utterance that names them. Which builds into the intersocial field of pronouns a place where persons are named, *but not as subjects* (since the third person can never lay claim to the only place for a subject to exist, at the word *I*). The two axes of the pronoun are *asymmetrical*. One *presides* over the other: one group speaks, the other is spoken *about*. (Bryson, in Bal (2001): 16)

7. Bryson is referring to Bal's essay "The Caravaggio Story" where she describes a certain juxtaposition of a group of paintings as provoking an *I-you* exchange.

8. *ibid.*

9. Bryson goes on to claim for Bal's essay that

[it] can be thought of as living proof of the way that the concept of the Gaze, once set in motion, releases out of itself the potential for its own multiple refractions. And yet the conceptual moves do not conform to the logic of the Gaze, but rather of discourse, enunciation, and voice. For one thing, the relations of "person" or "voice" that the essay dramatizes are not *visible*, as power is in the Gaze. The meanings that Bal finds in Caravaggio's paintings do not reside *in* them, in what we see, but in the way they are focalized or embedded in the actual discursive situation. (Bryson in Bal (2001): 19)

10. Several such visitors became quite hostile to those who became caught up in the installation asking them to get out of their way. I overheard several loud remarks: 'The Wallace must have gone mad!!'

11. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing* (1767) (81 x 64.2cm)

12. The film clips are taken from: *Martha*, Fassbinder (1972); *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, Fassbinder (1972); *Le Mépris*, Godard, Jean-Luc (1963); *Identification of a Woman*, Antonioni (1982); *L'Avventura*, Antonioni (1960); *L'Eclisse*, Antonioni (1962); *Dangerous Liaisons*, Frears (1988); *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Rappeneau (1990); *Les Amants*, Malle (1958).

13. I had sourced the love-seat from a props house. It was an original antique which the curator at the Wallace Collection had insisted on viewing before allowing it into his collection. We both considered it necessary that the work complemented the Collection.

14. Bryson, discussing how the viewer approaches Bernini's *David* (Bryson in Bal (2001): 25)

15. *Seminar XI* where Lacan formulates his concept of the gaze. (Copjec (1994): 34) describes it as articulating a point at which something appears to be invisible, missing from representation; there is nothing behind representation, it is this very failure of language to fully constitute the subject. 'The subject is the effect of the impossibility of seeing what is lacking in representation, what the subject, therefore, wants to see' (Copjec (1994): 35). It is the cause of the subject's being, its 'want-to-be'; 'it is what the subject does not see and not simply what it sees that founds it.' (Copjec (1994): 36).

16. Bryson in Bal (2001): 27

17. Quoting Benveniste's 'relation between the indicator (of person, time, place, object shown, etc) and the *present* instance of the discourse'. (Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 219)

18. "constative" speech acts as informative and affirmative. (Austin 1955)

19. This is Mieke Bal's argument for particular artworks in her book *Looking In: the art of viewing* (2001).

20. *Martha*, Fassbinder (1973).

21. Phillippa Plock gave a very interesting paper as part of the accompanying programme of talks to the exhibition at the Wallace, *Bucher: Seductive Visions exhibition*, which soon followed on after my installation in May 2004. In the paper she makes a re-appraisal of paintings at the time (though particularly that of Poussin) in relation to the depiction of masculine and feminine ideals of that period.

22. The scene is from *L'Avventura*, Antonioni (1960).

23. Bal is discussing David Reed's paintings.

24. Silverman (1996): 2

25. Lacan, J. (1975): 67

26. Silverman is here discussing Eisenstein's argument for a political cinema - through heteropathic identification.

27. Amelia Jones's *Body Art* was particularly important in arguing to shift the idea of such practices as merely narcissistic to one which proposed the works to allow an intersubjective relation.

28. For Deleuze, affect is *intensive* rather than *extensive* (that which organises the world spatially – which is what our everyday vision does; allows us to organize the world into purposes and intentions). But affect:

Is intensive because it happens to us, across us; it is not objectifiable and quantifiable as a thing that we then perceive or of which we are conscious. Affect operates on us in divergent ways, differencing in kind – the light that causes our eye to flinch, the sound that makes us start, the image of violence which raises our body temperature. Deleuze therefore refers to *intensities*. (Colebrook (2002): 39)

29. Luce Irigaray follows Bergson in his theorising of the *interval* (between perception and memory) which allows her to articulate sexual difference on an ontological level. Traditionally woman has represented a place for man as envelope or thing: 'theoretically there would be no such thing as a woman' (Irigaray, "How to Conceive (of) a Girl", p164); yet the interval allows woman to be 'found' in the gap between things and so create her sexual difference by 'distinguishing herself from both the envelope and the thing, ceaselessly creating there some interval, play, something in motion and unlimited which disturbs his perspective, his world, and his/its limits.' (Irigaray (1993a): 10)

30. Bardot's interrogation of Piccoli regarding her wish to know who she is (Do you love me?) is based on a belief that he will know. (And thus placing herself as an object to the person addressed). He is left with the burden of delivering an impossible affirmation.

31. I have recently given a paper on *Love Stories* (2004) at the symposium: 'Mediated pleasures in (post)feminist contexts'. (It was a part of a series entitled: 'Predicaments in Visual Culture', at the Bristol School of Art, Media and Design, University of the West of England.) I had identified the proposal for the symposium (see Appendix # 5) as especially relevant to the concerns of my PhD and particularly the ideas which I was exploring in *Love Stories* (2004). One of the aims of the symposium was to propose femininity and feminism as 'fluid, ambiguous or uncertain' and asked 'to what extent can practice drive theory in this regard? How might feminist understandings engage positively with contemporary representations of femininity when these speak of visual and bodily pleasures that are always-already mediated through popular culture?' It added:

Our position is that the strategic imperatives that informed second-wave feminism have shifted and, now that we are in a period of reassessment, there is an urgent need to develop feminist thinking that acknowledges mediated female pleasures in women's art practice.

Conclusion

I set out in this PhD to explore and develop possibilities for my art practice which propose to allow more open and enabling structures for the self where subject positions might become productive rather than seek to affirm a stable subject: a traumatic account of the self conceived (and experienced) as that which has been lost. My intention has been to develop a practice which might offer the possibility of freeing the feminine from the subjugated position as annexed 'other' in an hierarchical traumatic fixed mode of binary opposites, a practice where there is a possibility of a collapsing of binaries into a non-hierarchical order of change.

During this investigation I have made art works which I claim enable an encounter for the viewer of the work that is generative of new possibilities for conceiving of the self in the actual experience of the work – as sites of interchange. A practice therefore which is not descriptive of the condition of the self but allows an encounter with that which one is not (an other - as that which might threaten to dissolve the self); an encounter not as a way of absorbing, accommodating, or overcoming this otherness, but one that is productive of affirmative connections and relations; to produce another relation between viewer and artwork as a making and remaking of each other, as continually in process.

Both the text and the artwork seek to expose and perform what for me is an ending of the false oppositions between theory and practice, subject and

object, virtual and real, male and female. This is an art practice that encounters difference; not a production of a concept of difference, but a practice which presents and creates differences which do not perpetuate self-identificatory models. The artworks are not concerned with a production of meaning as such but rather, through affect, through a 'sensible' force, they become productive of content. I have been concerned to find a way out of the traumatic formulation of the self as theorised by psychoanalytic accounts, so damning to the female subject and have found Deleuze's ideas of *becoming*, particularly as elaborated on from the feminist perspectives of Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, as beneficial to engaging with my practice.

I claim my work as offering more enabling possibilities for a thinking of the self as open and expansive – not as oppositional. I propose that it is the experience of the actual works which enable this for the viewer. In *Love Stories (2004)* (the culmination of this research), I have described my surprise that some visitors actually refused to engage with this work; being open to change - to be open to the other – demands a receptiveness, as such encounters can profoundly challenge certain fixed notions of the self. These spaces – like the one created in *Love Stories (2004)* - I claim, offer possibilities for transformation. An opening up of the self to the other has profound implications and it is the space of the artwork which can make these propositions for the viewer. These are dynamic spaces where the affective dimension of the encounter demands a giving up of fixed notions of the self to

allow a dispersion, an engagement, with real and psychic spaces - mobile spaces open to phantasy - which open oneself to contingent enjoyment.

These are spaces of the incomprehensible, spaces of deep longing, where the sensuous (and sometimes the humorous) work to allow the anxiety which constitutes us to be encountered and re-worked. Encounters with primordial elements: depth of the ocean and the forest, with mermaids, sharks, aliens, mechanical monstrous animal; encounters mediated by the artwork with humour and with love in order to allow a meeting which is mutual (not hierarchical – with an intention to annihilate the other), one which allows an opportunity to encounter difference without the necessity of overcoming it. Here this other is not eliminated, absorbed into the self or eradicated. Here there is, in the encounter, a crossing over of the one with the other in a moment of intensity; the viewer is immersed in a (sensuous) space which allows a relation to this other without necessitating a collapse into sameness; an encounter respectful of difference where one might meet the other in a thrilling dialogue as a flow of continuous morphing. One might be changed by such an encounter. Here there is a formulation of difference which is conceptualized outside of the regimes of identity and oppositions; it undoes rigid hierarchies. Difference can now be thought of positively; this is not a question of an encounter with the other in order to overcome or eradicate difference. This mutual encounter insists upon a respectful distance to the other, it is an encounter where difference is not eradicated nor incorporated into the self. Nor does it reduce difference to sameness. The power implications for this are what is at stake in the feminist agenda; it promotes a

demand to give up a separate viewpoint of the world where difference is experienced negatively in a hierarchical relation to the other. It opens up a new creative open space for encounters with otherness and has serious political as well as ethical possibilities in challenging hegemonic power structures which set the one against the other in a play for dominance.

I claim that this is a space offered by the space of the artwork, the creative space of fiction - of creativity itself; the space of possible transformation from that which one might take oneself to be (one must be willing at least to meet the other – and not all viewers will be, as I have learnt). A space in which to give oneself up to the other in order to be changed by it. It is this affective space created by the artwork which I am claiming to be a site where new definitions of the self may be written (and practiced). It is an affirmation of a new subjectivity – productive of pleasurable/creative possibilities – through a sense of the self as interactive in the process of viewing; it has political and philosophical implications – and it is practice itself which will direct the theoretical/research questions to unsettle the humanistic/foundationalist account of western thinking, in order to allow change and free us from this self-identificatory project.

It has real implications, particularly for feminist art practices which move outside the restrictive regime of identity and opposition, by constructing practices which challenge and dismantle dominant traditional frameworks which have a restrictive definition of desire (related to lack), and seeks rather to articulate a concept of desire as an active force in order to achieve 'the ruin

of representation' (quoting Michele Montrelay). It is a 'becoming-other' which never stops being written – it has to continue: this production of knowledge; a practice which will be continued, with others, in dialogue. Though this project (as PhD) concludes, there is a paradox of this arrival: another departure point is necessitated; I will continue to explore these issues through my collaborative projects as co-convenor of the Chelsea College of Art & Design Research Group *Subjectivity & Feminisms* as part of the International Centre of Fine Art Research, The University of the Arts, London.

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Appendix 1

Speaking & Making

Extract from the collaborative publication with Joanna Greenhill, Kate Love and Susan Trangmar, 2001

Mo Throp. 'Re-counting and re-working' (pages 22 – 29)

Text reads as:

In this group of objects which I'm working on (three of which are illustrated here) I am re-counting and re-working recognisable 'traumatic' moments which have marked me (and you); events which have become culturally recognisable and registered as our 'collective' history – our shared narratives. Such moments have come to describe and represent our shared experience of what it is to be alive now.

John Kennedy's assassination recalled through the image of the pink pillbox hat worn by Jackie on the day of his death; the legend of Che Guevara secured by the best selling poster image ever produced; the ultimate female sex symbol, *Marilyn*, this time referenced through Warhol's screen-printed, bleached-out image. These are only three of the signifiers of our age – a particular time and place – images which remain culturally recognisable and which resonate as a part of our experience, our histories, constituting the society which produces us as individuals.

The events, though, haven't necessarily been witnessed first hand; it is through account (the re-telling) that we have come to know and to share the drama of the original traumatic moment. They are some of the stories that we need to keep telling of our past and which keep returning as repetitions for re-translation. These re-workings/re-tellings as artworks become re-descriptions of that which is too much for us. Not to get further at the truth, the original, but to allow the artwork to re-negotiate an understanding of our identities and describe fresh accounts of what we think we might already know.

Yet such moments (marked by this recognisable image), in a way, 'stand in' for something in excess of that moment (which they recall). They touch us so deeply that they allow a recognition and a re-telling of a loss/ a moment more significant than the ones symbolised here. Might they, in this touching, allow an access to an ability to recognise and possibly thereby mourn our own relation to loss (the very trauma of our coming into subjectivity: the loss that constitutes us)? For example, hearing someone say that Diana's death touched them more than their mother's; are they really saying it touched them in such a way that they were able to contemplate the question of death itself – of their own death – and the original trauma of loss? Maybe their mother's death was too close, too much, too real, and so blocked understanding. Was Diana's death so spectacular in its violence that it was enjoyable, that it allowed us to mourn our own traumatic subjectivity? For we are drawn to these traumas: we run to the scene; we revel in the horrific: we are superb in our re-counting – in our witnessing.

This re-counting / this reminiscence / this remembering;
These accounts, these confessions, these re-tellings;
I know I share them with you.
That of which we can never fully speak;
That of which we need forever to return, to repeat;
Collectively, individually, at the same time.

To return to the signifier;
To re-describe a fresh account of the unacceptable;
To conjure up from the past;
To transfer from one place to another.
To be always doing the work of translation;
To be always in the gap between.

For Freud, the past, our history, (with all it's horror, all it's anxiety, all it's loss)
is our only resource; we retell, produce language and so produce ourselves.

To recount that which we need forever to return to.
To recount that feeling (because it is a feeling: the piercing *touché*), that
trauma which incited the memory, indelible, demanding a re-counting, a
moment of fixing – a mark that I might recognise;
That I might hold on to it;
That I might return to.
In order that I might renegotiate my own subjectivity?
In order that I might be able to face my own death?
In order that I might be able to mourn and not be forever trapped in a
melancholic relation to the world, trapped in loss?

Does this recognition, this revisiting, this retelling, enable a relation to the
other which might reflect me, speak me, constitute me?
That which keeps slipping away from me;
That which jumps out at me;
That which is too much for me;
That which I nevertheless can recognise here in an image which can go
beyond it's own meaning, it's own origin, and say more than can ever be said,
known, understood.

Might such moments of recognition, of remembering, allow the impossible
other to break through – momentarily?

I try to re-tell it in the making of these particular objects. The glossy façade,
the luscious surface, is significant here. I repeat it, as it keeps slipping back
away from me. I recall it; it recalls me – and you; that which we might
momentarily recall as 'IT' (das ding), and attempt to hold on to it, in order that
we might know each other, that which we can never know, so that all is in the
present. Our yearning for connectedness is so overwhelming.
To allow a moment of touching, an attempt at that relation to loss; but it slips
away again – its surface is all I can get; the hard, repellent, shiny, reflective
surface.
To give oneself up to sensation: an active surrender.

To be left in the gap of forgetting what one thinks one might know.

To allow a way of negotiating our doubts about the failure of language to fully constitute ourselves.

To allow an opening up of this impossibility of the subject – of the knowing of oneself.

I am not able to fix on the surface of the object. As in the re-counting of the event, there is a recognition and a mis-recognition of ourselves in the artwork. Art is about the *real* which is difficult to testify to; it exceeds the personal. So what is it that I recognise? We live in images, and they live in us; they appear and interrupt words, capture all that is possible.

To make work then is not to look to establish a truth / an original or authentic self – but to carry on the process of the past – to allow a re-ferring forward. To make work is to be in that process, in that continuous flux.

Language itself then comes to offer up possibilities so that the pleasure of recognition might allow one to go forward and not to be stuck in the past.

Might the artwork allow for the eruption of another subject in ourselves and a disruption of the particularities of culture; to invent new names and not to repeat the old ones?

My desire to make work, to produce the artwork, to open up to the viewer, could be a process of rendering the intolerable (even the everyday is too much), the space of the non-fixity of self and other.

I want to put desire into a shareable form; to shift from the horror (of our impossible desire) to the acceptable (pleasure of language).

I want to put into the world (the performative act – as that which seeks not to fix or describe) in order to upset old meanings by creating new ones – new narratives, new selves.

I want to be in a relation to that which interpellates me.

I want to open up a space of those constitutive moments of feeling; of knowing and unknowing, of saying more than can be said.

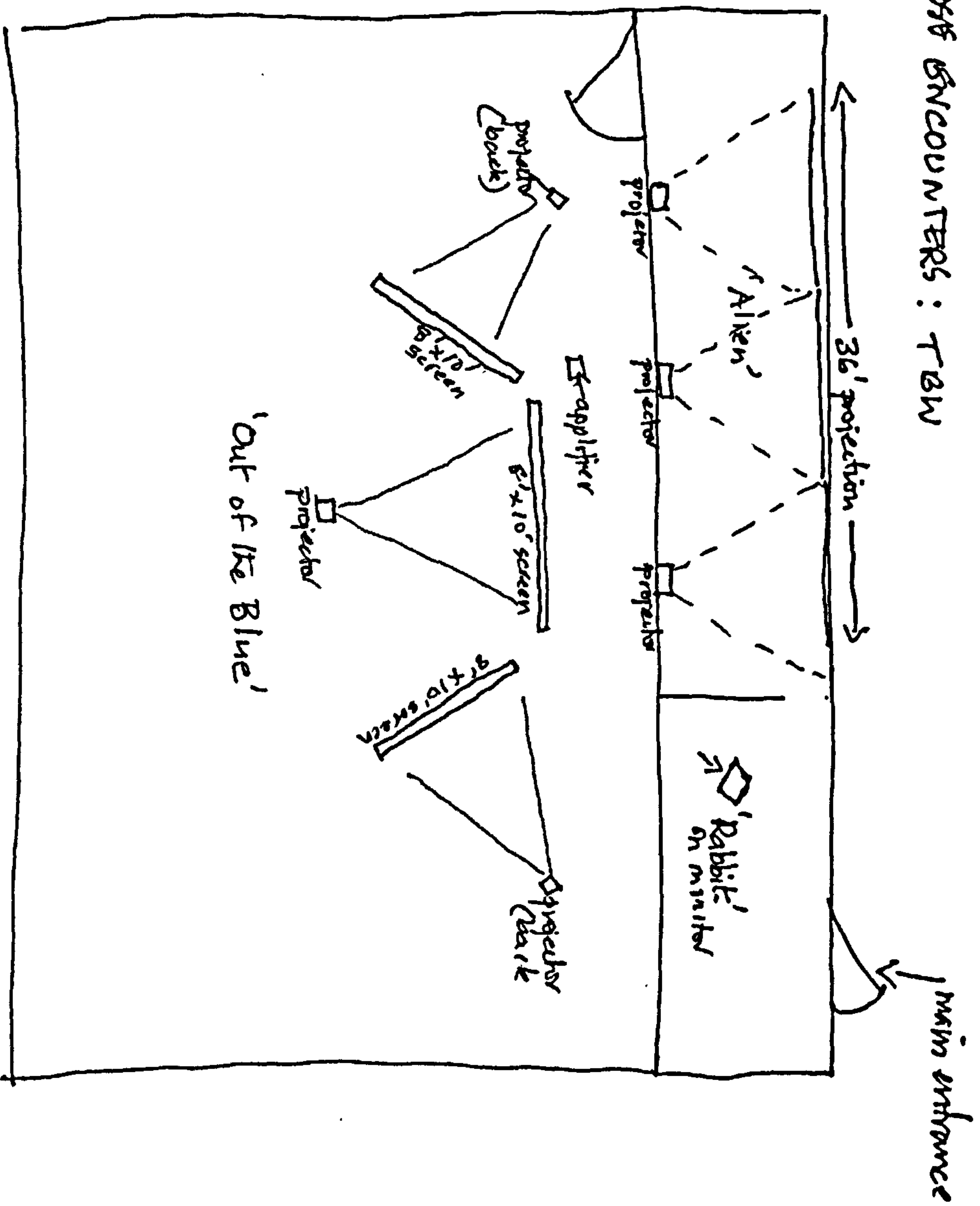
I want to render the intolerable; to put desire into a shareable form.

The desire to make work by re-telling the past – of what we think we might know. So that this re-telling (which the artwork negotiates for the spectator/beholder) might allow for a disrupting and a mourning of the past. It is not merely a desire to repeat – but to re-negotiate, to de-translate the material that makes up our lives.

I want a re-telling which might invite yet another re-telling – as always in process – as are own selves.

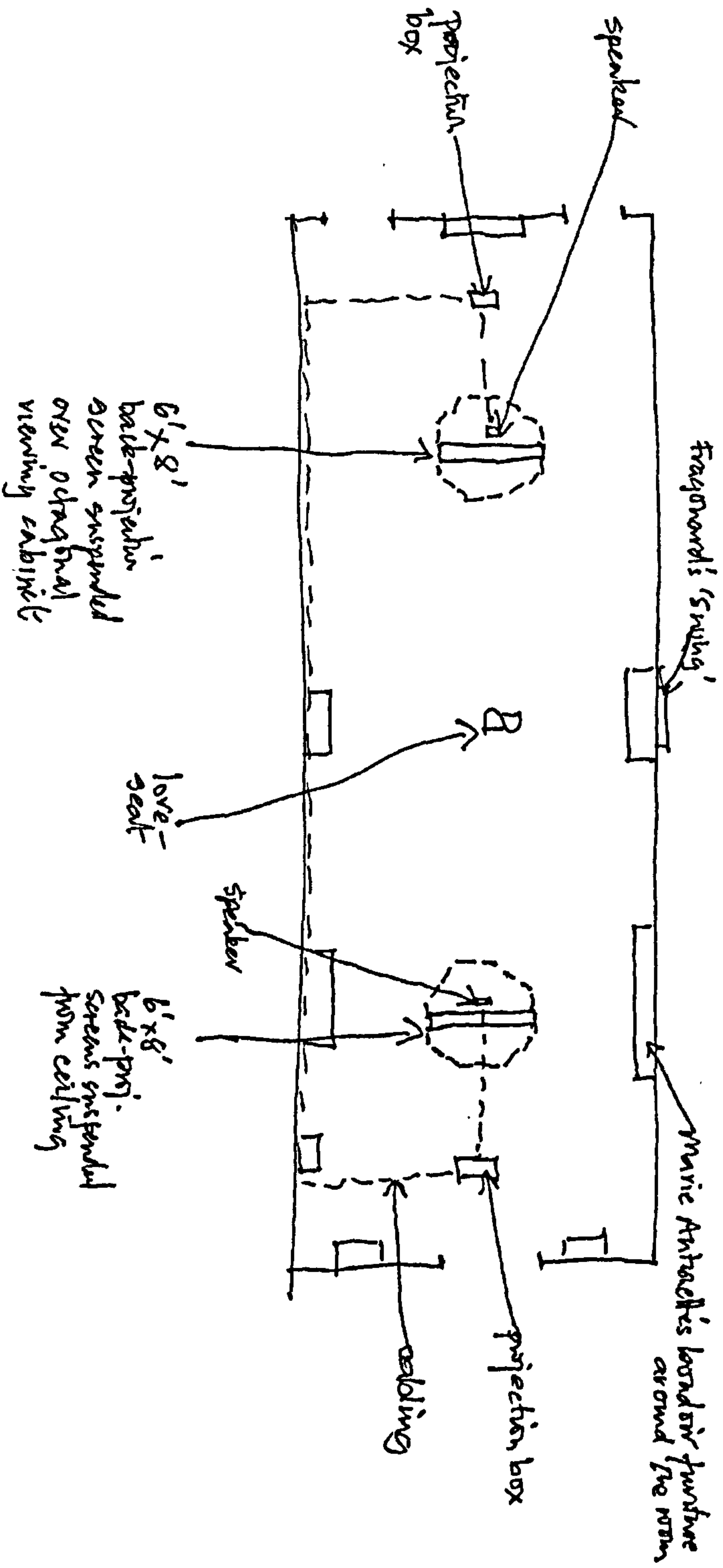
Appendix 2

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: TBM



Appendix 3

'Love Stories' THE WEST GALLERY, THE WALLACE COLLECTION



Appendix 4



The Wallace Collection
West Gallery

Mo Throp

Love Stories

Thursday 24th June, 10.00 to 5.00

Love Stories is a two-screen video installation made for the West Gallery of the **Wallace Collection**. The viewer is invited to take their place in the love-seat which is centrally placed in the gallery alongside such iconic images as Fragonard's *The Swing*. From this position s/he experiences a choreographed compilation of projected love-scenes from movies and is invited to consider the pleasure and erotics of viewing in the context of the Collection's 18th century feminine space of seduction and erotic display.

The viewer is caught up in an ongoing display of declaration, demand and rejection of love as an impossible relation to the other.

Love Stories 2004

two screen video projection with sound; 17 mins. 30 secs. looped

Video Editor; Jane Cina & Mo Throp

Special thanks: Edie Kahler, Rufus Kahler, Gerard Wilson, and also Jeremy Warren and Louisa Collins from the Wallace Collection.

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Supported by Chelsea College of Art & Design, University of the Arts, London.

The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, W1U 3BN
www.wallacecollection.org

Appendix 5

**Predicaments in Visual Culture,
Bristol School of Art, Media and Design**

Mediated pleasures in (post)feminist contexts

Abstract of paper: Mo Throp, Chelsea College of Art & Design

Love Stories

My recent video installation: *Love Stories* (a two-screen video installed in the West Gallery of the Wallace Collection, London) explores questions of romantic love as an impossible desire for the other. Using clips from movies, it explores how love-stories continue to define the contemporary subject in culture. The process of sexualisation enacted here is related to desire, fantasy and *jouissance* and remains disruptive of the social order in the context of this artwork. It is purely libidinous and works outside the economy of procreation (capitalism and the family); it opens up the gap in the symbolic, accentuating the fact that phantasy is always at play; to produce for the viewer an experience of the self that is in flux and not submitted to the law.

In this paper I will describe how this artwork (within this particular museum) embraces the viewer in a space of erotic longing and desire which doesn't return them to the usual relation to loss. Informed by Deleuze's concept of 'becoming woman' and more recent writings by Irigaray I argue for an engagement and creative response which allows for a dialogue of difference as non-oppositional; sensuous and expansive, it proposes a new relation to gender as beyond hierarchical (traumatic & fixed) oppositional positioning. This shifts from an account of sexuality (problematic or not) to one where the viewer is open to a re-negotiation with questions of otherness and difference that underpin any notions of identity.

Appendix 6

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF AN OTHER KIND

Proposal for an exhibition about a new relation to the feminine (or: the woman as 'other')

Recent exhibitions of contemporary art practice exploring female sexuality have tended to focus on empowering images of the woman in terms of the sexualized, libidinally aggressive, female body, e.g. *Bad Girls* (1993), ICA, London, and *Some Kind of Heaven* (1997), South London Gallery. 'Close Encounters of an Other Kind' intends to go beyond these previous exhibitions, proposing that there has been a shift in emphasis in the work being produced by women artists. In the work of the artists we have provisionally selected, the female body is de-sexualized to generate instead a sensualization of the viewing encounter.

In our encounters with the artworks which we have provisionally selected for this show, we have found that the female body produces a space of potential that engages the affective body of the viewer. In this encounter, the viewer discovers his/her own capacity to produce memories, feelings, and stories that exceed the frame of the image. Via the female body as a virtual site for this re-negotiation, the artwork creates an interval that opens the viewer to an affective dimension not reducible to gender.

In proposing this shift from the gendered female body to the virtual female body as fantastical, we are inspired by the theories of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his notion of 'becoming-woman'. When looking at the artwork, a consideration of this notion 'becoming-woman' does not mean that the viewer takes on the identity of a woman, but rather, that the viewer is opened to the array of *scintillating differences* that underpin any identity. These differences can be animal, mechanical, or alien in nature. The artwork enables a re-negotiation of this otherness that is an unacknowledged part of the self and which can be tapped via the emotional body. We claim this to be a new relation to the feminine.

Although the exhibition is underpinned by this radical theorizing, it is intended that the exhibition will be a visually exciting and sensual experience for the spectator. The work selected will therefore be of a sensual, fantastical nature, which might transport the viewer into a space not unlike that of *Alice in Wonderland*.

New work by approximately eight to ten women artists will be, predominantly, photography, video works, and, installations. Initially considered will be Lucy Gunning, Salla Tykka, Pipilotti Rist, Monica Oechsler, Xenia Dieroff, k.r. Buxey, Anne Katrine Dolven, Francesca Gore, and, Lisa Fielding Smith.

The female body as a virtual site for an affective encounter.

The artists:

In Lucy Gunning's series of videos, *Horse Impersonations* (1995?), the figure of 'woman' continues to be a site of this haunting virtual body encountered in the painful and humorous effort by the performer to mimic horses neighing. By means of the strange proximity of 'animal' sounds being emitted from a human mouth, the viewer is led into a deeply visceral experience of a buried, virtual body.

In Salla Tykka's *Lasso* (2000), a girl watches a young man through a window as he strenuously swings a lasso in a sitting-room. His outward expression of strength and aggression contrasts with her impassive face. This scenario of loss and exclusion is heightened by the exaggerated poignancy of Ennio Morricone's soundtrack for Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1969) and the tear the girl sheds as the lasso crashes to the ground. The film ends with a lingering shot of snow, the screen filled with a blankness that mobilizes the viewer's affective dimension with something beyond the gendered stereotypes of the scene.

In Anne Katrin Dolven's *Headlights* (2001), a couple, a naked woman and a clothed man, are lit by a car's headlights as they walk slowly through a field from the near distance of the screen to disappear into the blackness of the night. Initially, the woman's nakedness puts her in a vulnerable position, but this changes, as the only sign of their visibility becomes the woman's skin glowing like a dot on the horizon. Dolven's use of a plasma screen and the slow-paced duration of the walk, are key elements in leading the viewer towards an encounter where the woman is transformed into an anonymous sign of potential.

Xenia Dieroff's *Something's Got to Give* (2000) is a two screen installation of the artist, dressed in glamorous gown and high-heeled shoes, engaged in a tug-of-war with a mirror image of herself. The game is echoed in the actual installation itself by the twin film projectors which pass the film loop between them at different speeds. The anxiety and delight for the viewer is in the anticipation of the outcome when a loud, violent snap occurs as the film strip breaks in two so that one woman goes down followed shortly by her double, leaving us in the dark space of memory and affect.

Francesca Gore's video installation *Inexpert Familiar* (1999) has four images of her dog, a horse and herself riding a chair. The narratives allude to fairy-tale, myth and home-video's but resist romantic or poetic readings through her directly sexual and humorous style. The viewer becomes both self-conscious and enthralled, transported into this fantastical space of the virtual.

c. Mo Throp and Maria Walsh

Exhibition Catalogue

Accompanying our proposal, we also put forward the opportunity for funding from THE LONDON INSTITUTE for an exhibition catalogue. The catalogue, we envisage, would contain essays by us as well as statements by the artists in response to the concept of the show.

The Curators

Mo Throp is Course Director of BA Practice & Theory of Visual Art at Chelsea College of Art & Design, London as well as Critical Theory tutor on the Post-Graduate Diploma programme at Goldsmith's College, London. She has contributed articles to *Make* magazine and published a collaborative book *Speaking & Making* with three other artists. She is currently working on a practice-based PhD which considers the artwork as proposing an interactive viewing subject not set against itself but rather producing new possibilities, conceptualizing difference outside the constrictive regime of identity, opposition and resemblance, to produce and create affirmative connections and relations in which one can invent one's own narrative.

Maria Walsh is 0.5 Senior Lecturer in Art History & Theory at Chelsea College of Art & Design, London, as well as being a writer and art critic. She is a regular reviewer of contemporary art for *Art Monthly* and has published essays on artists film and narrative in *COIL* magazine and *The Visual-Narrative Matrix: Interdisciplinary Collisions and Collusions*. She has just completed a PhD in Media and Cultural Studies, which focuses on the possibilities of narration in suspended film moments, looking at Tacita Dean's *Disappearance at Sea* (1996) and Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* (1976) in particular. The subject area of her PhD entitled, *Identity-in-Motion: The Narrative Duration of the Dis/continuous Film Moment*, also addresses the 'feminine', claiming that the narrative performance engendered by the suspended film moment resonates with a feminine subjectivity. In this way, it relates to the exhibition proposal for 'Close Encounters of an Other Kind'.

Transmogrifications. Danielle Arnaud Gallery, London

12 March to 25 April 2004



Jan Dunning *Nyctimene* 2003 pinhole photograph

Glauce Cerveira Jan Dunning Lisa Fielding-Smith Pearl C. Hsiung Lynne Marsh
Eline McGeorge Anj Smith Julia Warr Annie Whiles Sarah Woodfine

curated by Danielle Arnaud, Mo Throp and Maria Walsh

The works in this exhibition explore the space of fantasy as an ongoing process of transmutative imaginings. In this space, the viewer is carried on a journey to other fantastical worlds of endless becoming. This process enables a liberation from static, finite ideals and generates possibilities for new connections to emerge, allowing the viewer to make links with their own imaginary repertoires. These transformative processes of fantasy are evidenced within the actual materiality of the works themselves as forms and figures merge and transmute in delightful, playful constellations that move us beyond our specific self-identities. The affects and intensities of these works act as mediators that allow the spectator to engage in an endless process of transmogrification. This process, where one thing becomes another in an ongoing mutation of identity, is simultaneously disturbing, enlivening, joyous and dark.

Eline McGeorge's computer-animated drawings take a single still drawing on paper or on the computer as a starting-point to produce a sequence of layered drawings that mutate on-screen in the style of free-association - engendering imaginary narratives and worlds in the process.

In Pearl C. Hsiung's video-work, everyday activities such as walking and eating set off a chain of metonymic substitutions that move from the ordinary into a transformative space of dynamic possibility. In this process, the image moves into a virtual dimension that is funny, physical and jives to a pounding beat.

Anj Smith's paintings present fantastical female creatures in the process of becoming hybrid entities crossed by the signs of rock chick, fairy tale or gothic princess, and cutesy animals.

The female protagonists in Lisa Fielding-Smith's videos perform versions of female fantasy and desire, using minimal props and costumes to create theatrical situations that engender a sense of anticipation and suspense for the viewer. In the performance of these simulations of identity, a sense of risk is posed.

Jan Dunning's photographs, made with a pinhole camera, present scenes of transmogrification where one being is caught in the state of becoming another. Via these mutations of identity, we are led through stages of erotic self-dispossession, which are both magical and fantastical.

In Annie Whiles' embroidered insignia fabricated from felt, satin and canvas and pasted onto the wall, a series of heraldic portraits revolve around the central image of a crow. Each portrait's coiffure, stitched and made from real hair, is shown in a process of transmutation that furls beyond the frame of each face, thereby imparting narrative flow into the stasis of the heraldic shield.

Julia Warr's paintings imbue the abstraction of the grid with the iconography of the female image. The grid-like structures fragment the female icons into parts that can be assembled in infinite variations.

In Glauce Cerveira's painting a dense colour field made from tiny beads manifests a mysterious mask-like figure that floats across the surface. The ground of the image is differentiated from the mask by the use of subtle hues that shimmer and shift in tone as the viewer moves in front of the work.

Lynne Marsh's recent video work consists of imaginary happenings. By introducing performative elements into real and fictional spaces, she juxtaposes the social, the environmental and the personal in a playful examination of female identity. The video for the exhibition will present a woman hanging upside down from the ceiling of a ballroom, spinning in a shimmering sequined costume, reflecting the pattern of light around the space. For this exhibition, the artist was supported by Arts Council England and University of Hertfordshire.

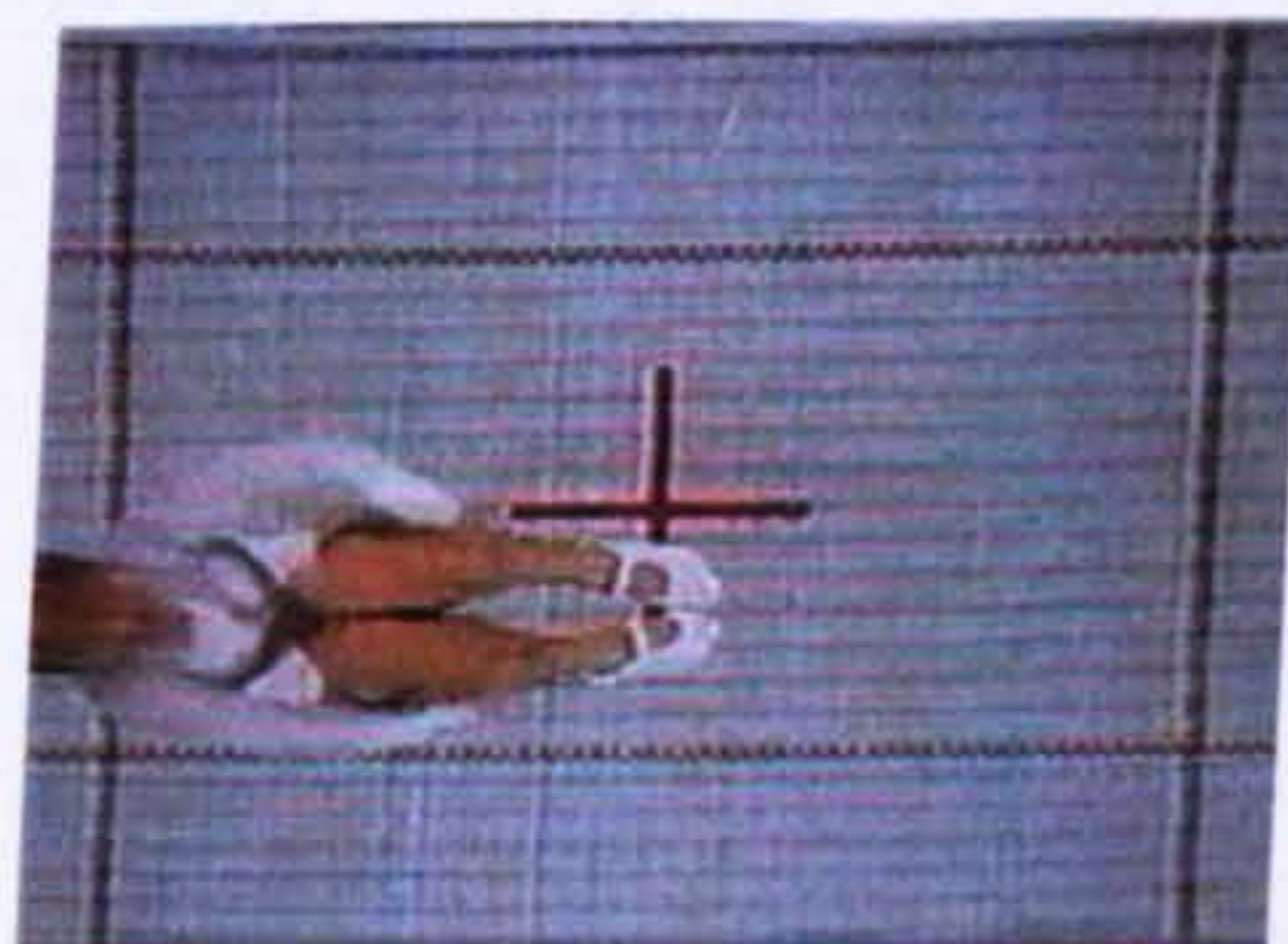
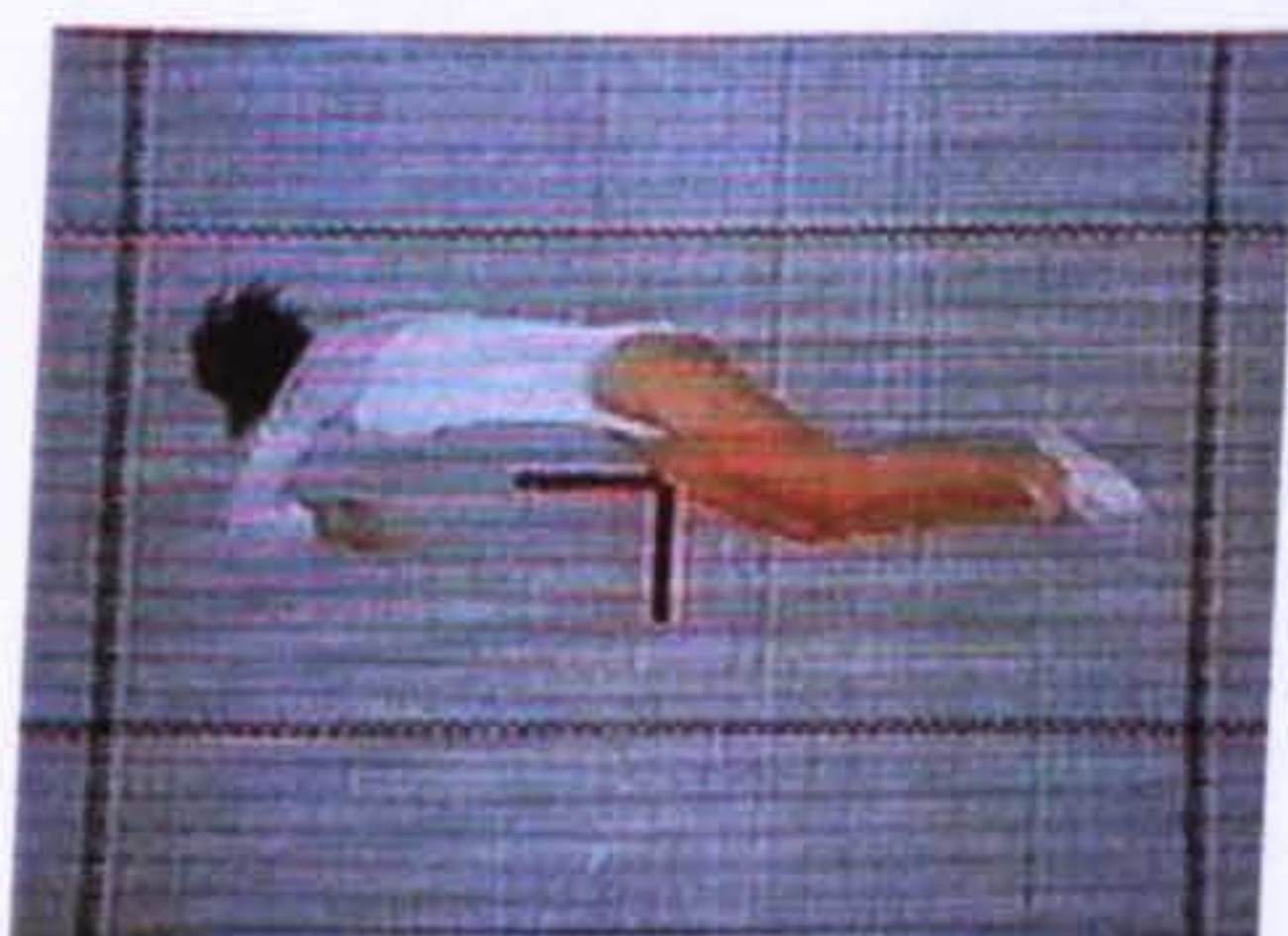
In Sarah Woodfine's drawings, cut-out elements can only be completely read when viewed at a specific angle. Figure and landscape merge and appear as the eye moves around the artwork.



Glauce Cerveira *This Season's Must Have - Head I* 2001
oil, acrylic and synthetic crystals on canvas 51 x 41 cm



Jan Dunning *Arachne* 2003
pinhole photograph
98.5 x 128 cm

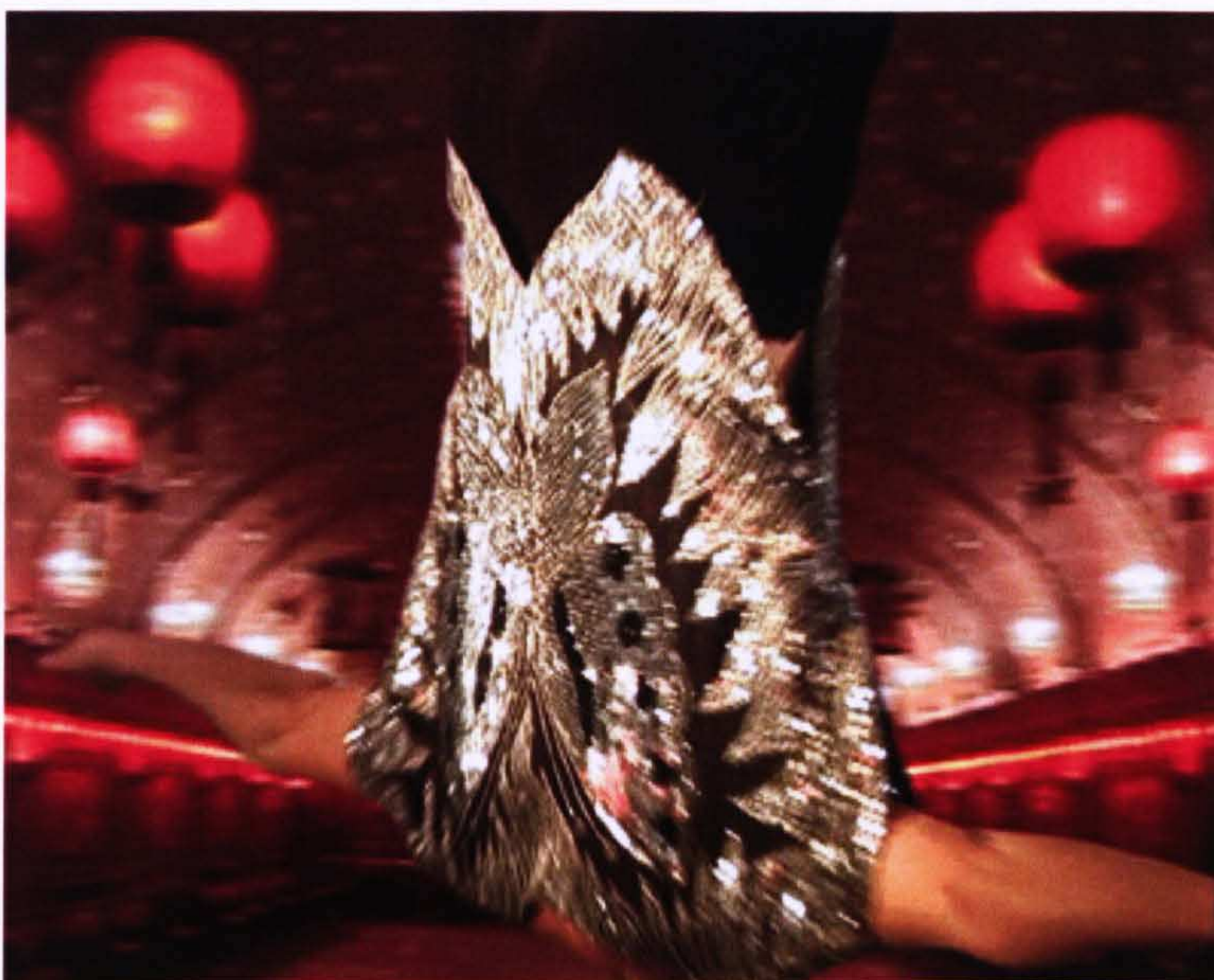


Lisa Fielding-Smith *Drum Roll* 2004
video

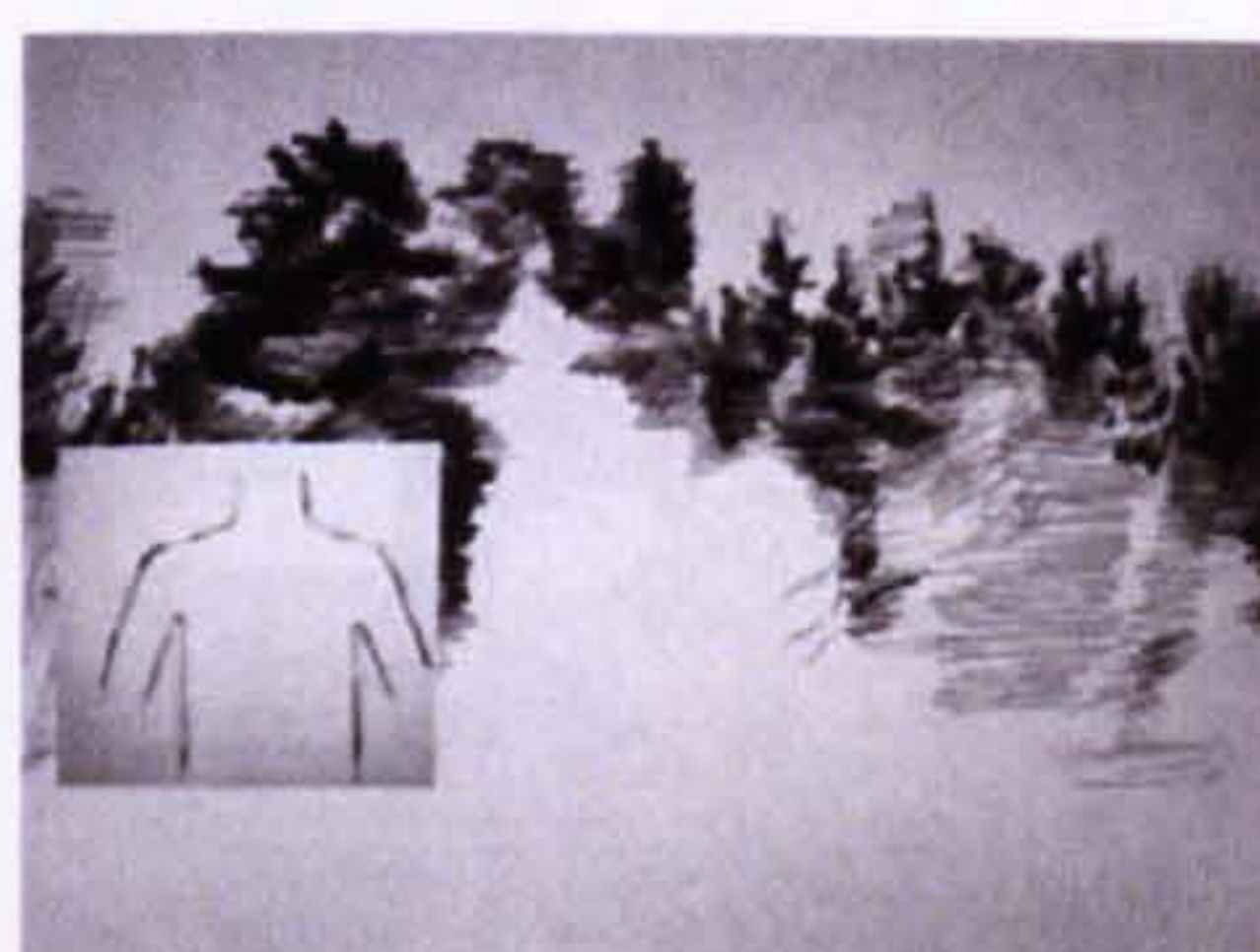
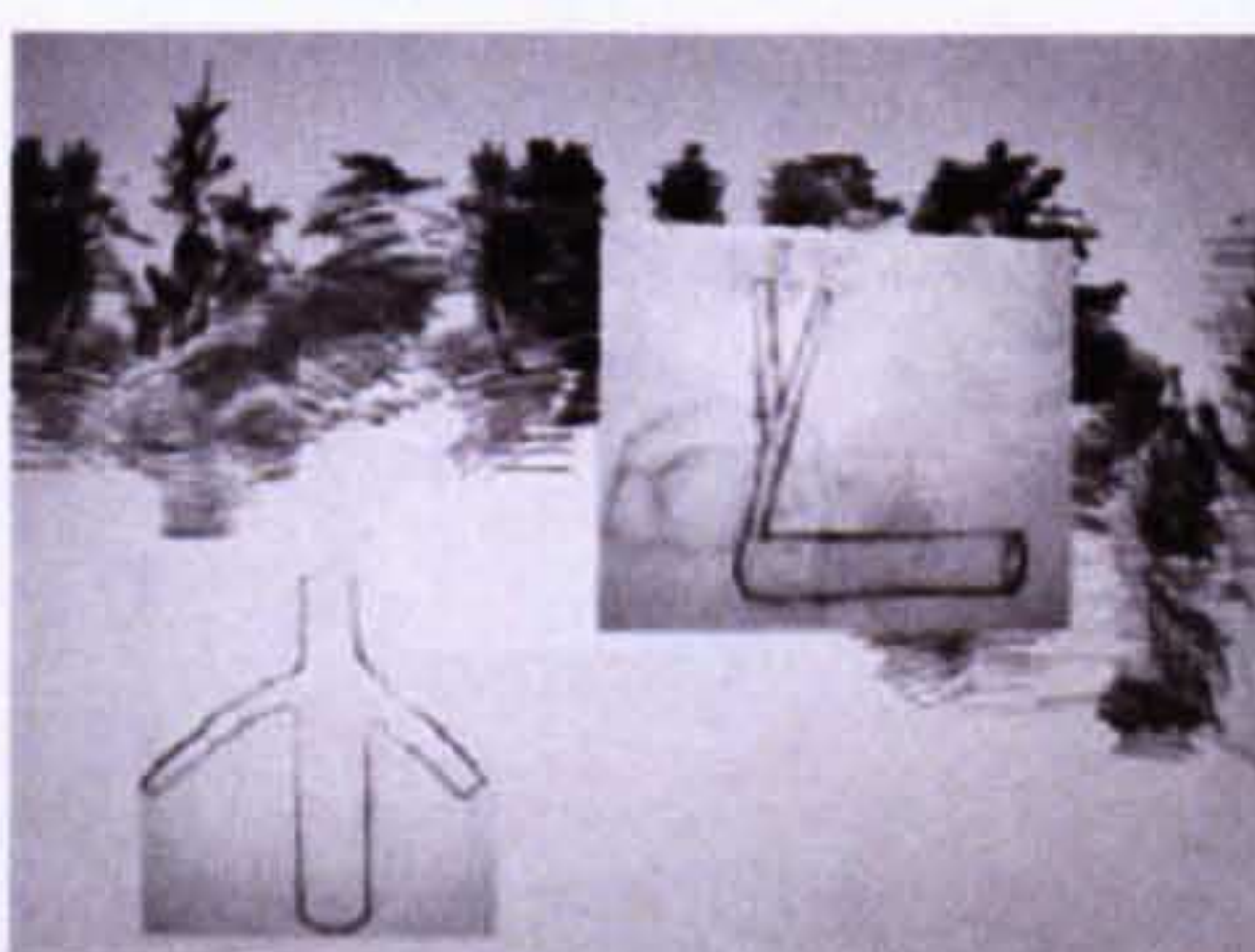




Pearl C. Hsiung *Kickstart* 2003
video



Lynne Marsh *Ballroom* 2004
video



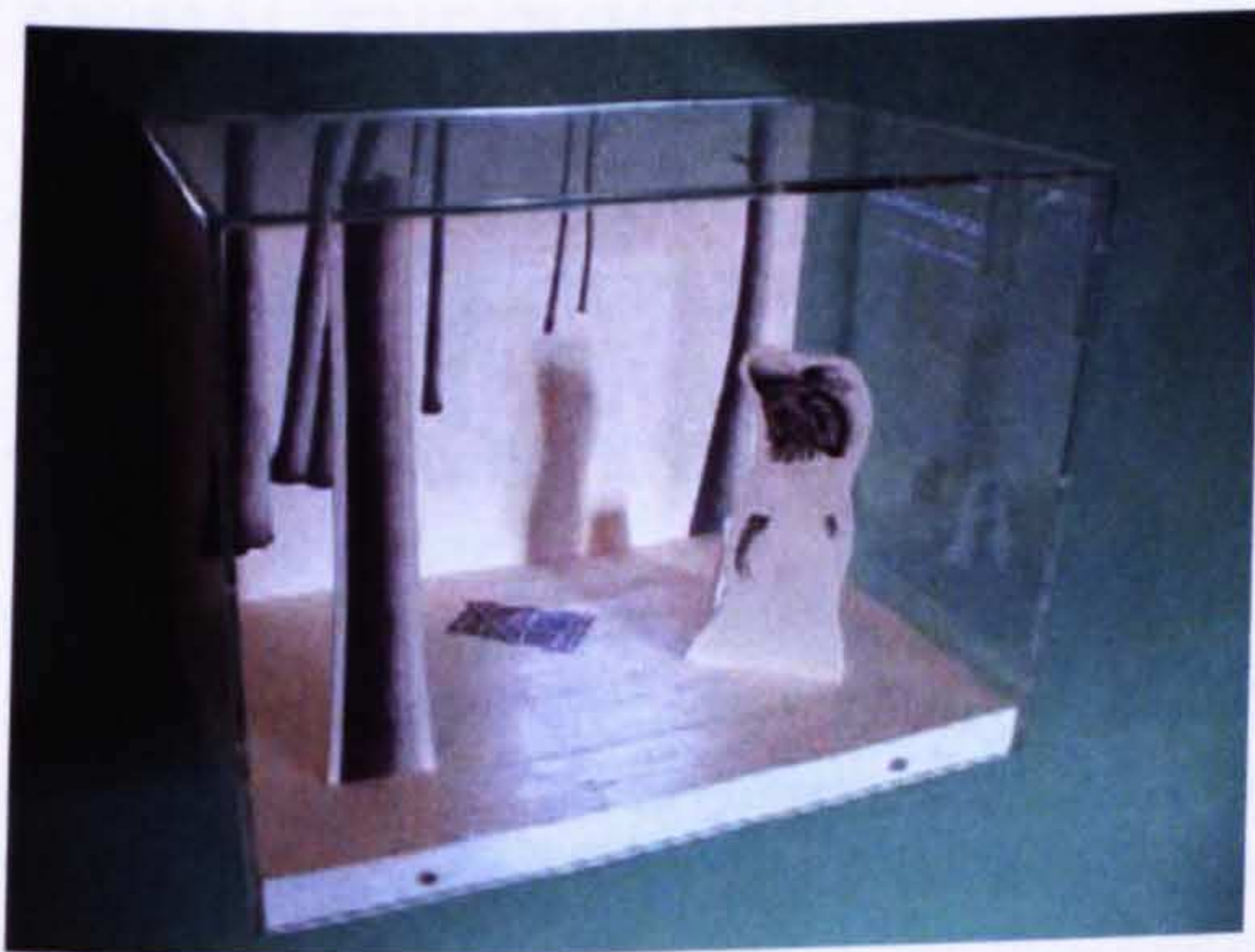
Eline McGeorge *Unexpected Elsewhere 3* 2003
DVD drawing animation on plasma screen (detail)
courtesy: Niklas von Bartha Gallery



Anj Smith *Polyesteria* 2004
oil on linen
25 x 30 cm



Annie Whiles *Bad Chair Day* 2002
embroidery silks, felt, canvas and satin
56 x 56 cm



Sarah Woodfine *Untitled* 2004
pencil on paper and perspex box
23 x 30.5 x 23 cm

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

An exhibition of contemporary artist's work exploring a space in-between the categories of human and animal.

Curated by Mo Throp and Maria Walsh.

Images, motifs, and perspectives of the animal abound in contemporary art. Some recent examples include Jana Sterbak's *From Here to There* (2003), a multi-screen video projection which chronicles travelling through the cities of Venice and St Lawrence, Canada from the camera perspective of a dog and Lucy Gunning's, *The Horse Impressionists* (1995), a video in which five women mimic horses neighing to strange effect (we don't have to include this as an example as it may be old but I think it suggests what we are about). Unlike the secure hold on meaning that characterized animal symbolism in the 19th century, contemporary animal imagery in art, as Steve Baker puts it in his book *The Postmodern Animal*, 'serves to resist or to displace fixed meanings'.

The artist's works in ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS do not merely represent animal forms, but use the animal as a creative space to generate hybrid sensibilities in-between human and animal. These in-between sensibilities are not imitative, but sites of ambiguity that generate empathy and affect. The encounters with animal forms and categories set in motion by the works in this exhibition allow for a 'non-human, non-pedestrian, movement in the strange imaginative spaces of the animal' (Baker), which transforms unitary identity, dismantling the perspective of human mastery over the animal. Rather than anthropomorphising the animal, the works in this exhibition allow the viewer to move towards the animal other in an empathic mode, but at the same time, they make the viewer question the boundaries that constitute the relations between one form and another.

This process is close to what the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call 'becoming-animal'. As Deleuze and Guattari state, a 'becoming' is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between (Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*). In the movements of 'becoming', social attachments are momentarily suspended and the fluid dynamic of metamorphosis is put in play. This allows for a re-negotiation of the categories that define us as social. The works in ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS reference a variety of sources to generate this fluid dynamic from myth and fairy-tale to natural history. In their attempts to destabilize the hierarchical binary of human and animal, the works in this exhibition are funny, poignant, critical, sometimes charming, and not a little disturbing.

List of Possible Artists

In Salla Tykka's photographic series of 2002, young women use their bodies to perform animal and bird poses. Without any theatrical props, the women's facial expressions and bodily gestures incorporate the foreign animal forms without losing their own identities, thereby confounding the stereotypes of woman as animal.

Daphne Wright *Sires* (2003) consists of a DVD fixed camera projection of a group of cow's legs shot from hoof to above the knee as they wade in the shit and muck of a milking parlour. While the piece brings to mind the forms of animal husbandry that dominate contemporary farming practices, as the film progresses, this idea recedes as the strangeness and beauty of the legs balletic choreography takes over and a space between the human and the animal opens up.

In **Edwina Ashton's** videos, humans dressed in homemade insect and animal costumes tell stories, enact human activities such as flower arranging or simply do nothing. These charming and/or pitiful scenarios generate a mixture of pathos and empathy for the viewer, as well as allowing us to take a humorous perspective on the vagaries of the so-called human condition.

Nicky Coutts uses digital photography to create images, which suggest an incongruous proximity between animal and human habitats and forms. In her series of black and white photographs *The Animal Rooms* (1999), an elephant appears in a domestic sitting-room awkwardly dominating the scene. This unhinging of human and animal lairs at the level of the imaginary is echoed by the digital technology in which origins are replaced by repeatable codes.

Liz Arnold's paintings depict humorous, quirky, scenes in which animal and human forms are juxtaposed and interchanged suggesting strange other worldly narratives that also resonate with the social world of human interaction. In *Fun Lover* (1997), a girlish figure stands resolutely in an interior doorway, her head transmogrified into a dog/lion with her/its tongue exposed, her pose enacting a mini-drama of desire.

In **Sarah Miles's** 3-minute film, *I Love You* (1991), the artist is dressed in a provocative hare costume echoing the ambiguous sexuality of the bunny-girl as in-between adult and child. Miles uses this persona to explore familial bonds and feelings of desire and alienation.

Daniel Sinzel's recent paintings reconfigure the metaphorical relation between man and animal into more literal analogies by presenting simulated animal parts, such as a pair of horns or a tail, outside the paintings frames. These animal signs form a non-transcendent outside to the paradisiacal homoerotic scenes depicted within the frame of the paintings, a display that questions the boundaries between animal/human, inside/outside, and the acceptable/the unacceptable.

Rita Rego's films and videos use animation to rework fairytale scenarios with a humorous twist. In both *The Fox* (2002) and *La Souris Verte* (2001), women's dress shoes take on the form of little mice without changing into mice per se. These shoe/mice creatures oscillate between categories of human and animal, their comic character allowing them to shift between worlds of fantasy and the real.

In **Rachael Rawlings's** recent oil paintings, girls cavort with horses and dogs in mischievous poses that seem to conform to stereotypical identifications of

adolescent femininity with these animals. The illustrational depiction of the scenarios appears to affirm this view. However, the materiality of the paint as it leaks and drips between forms and the precarious nature of the poses themselves generate moments of instability that suggest a much more fluid and comic dynamic.

Canadian artists **Emily Vey Duke & Cooper Battersby's** video film, *Bad Ideas for Paradise* (2002), presents architectural spaces from the point of view of a mouse. The creatures labyrinthine scurrying is intercut by a scene depicting teenage boys skateboarding, which makes the viewer take an estranged (animal) view of human interaction and camera vision.

In **Lisa Prior's** installation *Animal Husbandry* (2003), a video charts a woman's hilarious and never-ending quest to find a husband. This is made all the more poignant when considered in conjunction with the objects on low plinths which are installed in close proximity to the monitor; here, several versions of man's best friend are reduced to an essence of 'dogginess'. Each version is constructed with a tender and seemingly casual arrangement of a soft blanket, which mimics the shape of a sleeping dog. Elegant and delicate porcelain forelegs protrude from the blankets at various points. The installation is completed by a series of sketches of dogs conveying a similar fondness for the beast as well as several glass cases containing more porcelain forelegs displayed like relics.

Chris/Kitchen (2004), a video installation by **Kate Smith** consists of three monitors that sit on metal shelving illuminating the layout of a kitchen inhabited and overrun by ferrets. A woman washes ferrets instead of dishes. This vermin infestation upturns boundaries between the domestic and the bestial.

Alain Miller makes large paintings, which focus on particular animal parts and magnify them so that they become almost unrecognizable. The image begins to slip between an actual identifiable form and an abstraction – neither one nor the other.

Beata Veszely works with performance, photography and video to act out her passionate attachment to horses. The work takes on a performative identification with the animal, which is both humorous and unnerving.

Jan Dunning's photographs, made with a pinhole camera, present scenes which capture the female body in a state of becoming-animal. Via these mutations of identity, we are led through stages of erotic self-dispossession, which are both magical and fantastical.

In **Annie Whiles's** embroidered insignia fabricated from felt, satin and canvas and pasted onto the wall, two hybrid creatures with male torsos and long-beaked bird heads confront one another. The static nature of the insignia creates a moment of tension between these two figures which makes us reflect on the tropes of recognition between self/other, human/animal.

Dog (2003) is a short film (shot on super 8) by **Emma Todd** presented on a small screen as a continuous loop. What one suspects to be a pedigree dog walks very gracefully, with speed, determination and a certain anxiety across the screen and back again in an endless search for an unidentifiable goal. The dog's action takes on a tragic and desperate aspect for the viewer as the poor animal becomes trapped in this traumatic cycle.

c. Maria Walsh and Mo Throp

ICFAR RESEARCH PROJECT: Subjectivity & Feminisms (in visual culture/fine art culture)

Group members:

Staff: Mo Throp, Dr. Maria Walsh, Dr. Hayley Newman, Sutapa Biswas, Lucy Gunning, Jo Bruton, Brian Dawn Chalkley, Edwina Ashton, Sarah Dobai and Abigail Reynolds.

Research students: Jenny Lu, Sarah Smith

UAL collaborators: Kate Love (CSM), Susan Trangmar (CSM), Paula Smithard (CSM), Katja Hock (CSM research student), Verena Gfader (CSM research student)

The **Subjectivity & Feminisms** research group consists of artists and writers whose practices explore questions of identity as they are mediated between artist/writer and art/work and viewers and art/work. The emphasis on the fluidity and processual nature of these spaces challenges usual conceptions of identity as stable. While not all members of the group address feminism(s) directly, the research group acknowledges the legacy of feminist thinking in opening up aesthetics to a consideration of the spaces of intersubjectivity between subjects and objects.

The **Subjectivity & Feminisms** research group sees itself as being key to the growth of research-led culture at Chelsea and the UAL. Current plans for development include an inaugural exhibition, publication and symposium at Chelsea College in Autumn 2005. Other possible projects include the Chinese Women's Fellowship Program, a series of residential fellowships for female practitioners from China. The group proposes using the expertise of individual members to generate ongoing research opportunities and to develop a research strategy that supports an organic expansion. This may include appointment of readers, fellows, professors and co-ordinators alongside scholarships for doctoral and post doctoral research.

Aims:

- to articulate, critique and share common concerns and interests as practitioner/researchers.
- to initiate a series of events which address issues of the inter-relations between subjectivity and the artwork, and self and other in the artwork particularly in relation to feminist theories.
- to incorporate issues of racial identity, disability and queer theory.
- to establish a platform in order to advance a community and culture of researchers (staff and students) within Chelsea and across UAL, in order to make apparent the relationship between research and the teaching/learning environment.
- to seek collaboration nationally and internationally in order to provide opportunities for exchange between artists, writers and audiences

Group Members:

Hayley Newman has worked with performance, sound, video, text and photography. Solo exhibitions include 'The Daily Hayley' at Matt's Gallery in London; the IKON Gallery in Birmingham and the Centre d'arte Contemporain, Geneva (2001-3). Publications include *Performancemania* (Matts 2001), *Daily Hayley*, *Shanghai Week* and *Chicagoland* (all 2004) and *Le Notti di Roma* (2005). Her current interest in *Rubbernecking* describes the act of slowing down, craning the neck and straining to look and involves a series of trips to places reported in the daily news. She recently held the Arts Council of England Helen Chadwick Fellowship at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford.

Maria Walsh is a writer interested in interdisciplinary critical writing on the moving image and spectatorship. Her research interests include phenomenology, feminist readings of time and space, and encounters with moments of absence in relation to the moving image. Recent relevant publications include: 'The Immersive Spectator: A Phenomenological Hybrid', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol 9, no 3, Dec 2004; and 'Intervals of Inner Flight: Chantal Akerman's *News From Home*', *Screen*, vol 45, no 3, Autumn, 2004. She is currently working on an essay on Salla Tykka's film installation, work-in-progress for which was presented at the *Mediated Pleasures (post)Feminist Contexts* Symposium, Predicaments in Visual Culture, UWE Bristol, March 2005. In Mar 2004 she collaborated with Mo Throp to curate an exhibition of 10 female artists, *Transmogrifications*, at Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art London.

Mo Throp questions how a rethinking of desire might elaborate alternative definitions of female sexuality; not in a relation to lack – but rather as an active force. Her practice seeks to collapse gendered positions where the viewing subject might experience another relation to the self as a making and re-making of each other through a sense of self as interactive in the process of viewing. Currently completing a PhD at Chelsea. Recently shown *Love Stories* at The Wallace Collection, London; *Through the Surface*, Lublin, Poland, 2003. *Transmogrifications*, a group exhibition curated with Maria Walsh at Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London; *Speaking & Making* a collaborative publication with Susan Trangmar & Kate Love, 2003. Paper presented at *Mediated Pleasures (post)Feminist Contexts* Symposium, Predicaments in Visual Culture, UWE Bristol, March 2005

Sutapa Biswas's work engages with issues of feminism, cultural identity and memory. Her films are informed by a strong painterly aesthetic and draw from a variety of literary and visual sources, from writings by Marcel Proust and the psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon, to paintings by George Stubbs, Edward Hopper and Jan Vermeer. Biswas has exhibited internationally including at Tate Modern, London, and at Yale University Art Gallery, USA. Her recent solo exhibition "Birdsong" has toured England, and she has a forthcoming solo exhibition at The Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery in Oregon, USA. Her monograph "Sutapa Biswas", includes essays by the writer and film critic Laura Mulvey, writer and curator Guy Brett, and art historian Griselda Pollock, amongst others, and is published by iNIVA, London.

Jo Bruton's work explores the female performer within abstract painting, accumulating visual material from a number of sources which are then transformed into abstract motif. Individual histories and costume are examined through an open process where an initial construction of the painting's surface creates a context for the activity to take place. The aspiration of the performer and expectation of the viewer are a constant focus for the paintings where failure and success are negotiated through the surface of the work. Currently working on a site-specific painting installation for the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on-sea. Recent research has included a solo show at Matt's Gallery, London. Group exhibitions: 'but not as we know it...' at Kontainer Gallery, Los Angeles; 'Warped- painting and the feminine' at the Angel Row gallery, Nottingham; 'Pattern Crazy' at the Crafts Council, London. Also included in the book, 'Unframed' by Rosemary Betterton. Recent recipient of two AHRB Small Awards.

Brian Dawn Chalkley makes work which reorganises space and subjectivity in relation to gender ambiguity in order to construct a transgendered look. His videos confront the viewer with a recognition of how processes of differentiation take place and disturb the forms of knowledge upon which we usually rely.

Lucy Gunning's work engages with the space of the in-between in relation to social behaviour and architecture; ways in which people resist being brought into societal line. She makes observations of the world around her, punctuating space with imagery and sculptural decisions; the work exists between the cross referencing of its parts. Behaviour becomes important in terms of subjectivity through a consideration of the filming of the subject matter and the way in which the viewer negotiates the space of the artwork. Current research: Ideas

to do with the un-built, incomplete and formless in relation to architecture and behaviour; ways in which architecture and architectural structures can act as sculptural elements and staging/framing devices. Recent solo exhibitions include *Esc* at Matt's Gallery, London and *Quarry* at GreeneNaftali Gallery, New York. Recent group shows include *Love Story* at Danielle Arnaud Gallery, London, *With Hidden Noise* at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds and *The One Doesn't Stir Without The Other* at Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast; British Art Show 5 in 2000; recent recipient of a Paul Hamlyn Individual Artists Award; Rome Scholarship in 2001. She has work in numerous collections including: the Arts Council Collection, Hayward Gallery, London; Tate Gallery, London; Museum of Modern Art Toyama, Japan; Centre George Pompidou, Paris.

Sarah Dobai works with photography, video and film. She is currently the holder of the Delfina Studio Residency (2004-6). Recent solo exhibitions include: *What we talk about when we talk about love*, Galerie Zurcher, Paris (2004), *Two on a Party* ARTLAB, Imperial College (2003) and *Sarah Dobai* at Artist's Space, New York (2002). Recent group shows include: *Sodium Dreams* Bard College, New York State (2003), *Shimmering Substance* Arnolfini/Cornerhouse (2002) and *September Horse* Kunstlerhaus bethanien, Berli (2002).

Abigail Reynolds works with spatialising and visualizing information sequences and relationships. A tension between the objective presentation of fact and its subjective interpretation is brought into play. Her work involves layered collaborations with institutions and disciplines outside the art context as well as within it. Recent shows include New Contemporaries 2003, a solo show in Mu, Eindhoven, State of Mind at the LSE in London and After the Fact, Carlisle 2005. She is preparing new work for a group show at Angel Row gallery, Nottingham. She recently finished a Leverhulme residency at the Oxford English Dictionary, and is beginning a research residency at the Serpentine Gallery in collaboration with the Dyslexia Institute.

Edwina Ashton

Jenny Lu (Chelsea research student) uses the "unheimlich" (unhomely) as subject as well as device for most of her video work. She is interested in the psychology of the viewer and often twists the images of ordinary, familiar situations, which make the normal activities seem to go slightly askew. Her video evokes the unheimlich in our everyday life and leaves unease for the audience. Much of Jenny's work is informed by issues surrounding her cultural identity and the communication difficulties she has faced as a Taiwanese artist, living, studying and working in the UK for seven years. Her video *Itching* shows a figure, scratching herself in an increasingly more aggressive manner and can be seen as a physical metaphor for psychological suffering.

Sarah Smith (Chelsea research student) explores how social structures are created and modified through speech. She uses the relationship between female subjects to address the notion of kinship. Her practice uses different styles of address and negotiates different positions of speaker and listener. Dramatic devices of improvisation and collaboration are used to disrupt the structure of conventional feminine narratives. Focusing primarily on *Gothic* and *Claustal* styles of writing she questions what it means to be trapped within the boundaries of a community, and a gender, through language.

Collaborators:

Susan Trangmar's (CSM) practice pursues the following research interests; an exploration of the cultural production and reproduction of space taking into consideration the different meanings of place, location and site and a concern with site as the enactment of social relations. Her work also explores the construction of fields of vision and opticality as part of a matrix of physiological and psychic experience informing subjectivity. The materiality of light is an ongoing subject of exploration, in particular the possibility of engagement with it as a

'touching relation' in contrast to its conventional role as guarantor of visibility and knowledge. Visual and special experience is understood through temporal experiences of interval and duration and a consideration of how the interval between perception and recollection is informed by the imaginary. These strands of interest combine in a practice which seeks to explore a politics of place through subjective agency and intersubjective relations. Recent works *A Question of Distance* and *Road Map* combine a variety of media in an interlacing relation of parts which explore an expanded field of image/text relations: live performance/projection; video with spoken sound; printed page and text in publication.

Paula Smithard (CSM Historical & Theoretical Studies) undertakes research that explores feminist art practice & its legacy; multi-sensory aesthetics; feminism, postmodernism and notions of difference; issues of visibility and the gaze with, especially, visualisation technologies in science and medicine which reference the political and ethical implications for the female body. Current work is re-evaluating feminist art practice & debate with regard to those artists and practices situated in an ambiguous or problematic relationship to its past histories and orthodoxies e.g. Helen Chadwick. Paula has a PGCE (H.E.) and is a member of the Higher Education Academy and is interested in feminist and socially-engaged models of pedagogy.

Verena Gfader (CSM research student) My current investigation takes place between notions such as *active works* and *inter-active engagements* in work. This involves the identification of a confusing site in contemporary practice which relies on interactive relations. The research seeks to place interactive practice at the centre of the confusion with work that appears collective *and* singular, event-like *and* durational, relational *and* optical. The dialogue reveals that in these combinations a third site emerges irreducible to the earlier mentioned juxtaposition between the active work and the inter-active engagement. My practice involves cine-work (*marx balance*) and interactive play (*Moving Jigsaw*). Recent works: *DATA_HOME HOME_DATA*, 2005 an exhibition of animation and interactive work, ICA digital studio with a publication (catalogue/CDRom) as an **ICA-post-production**; *Disorientations In New Media Practice*, Symposium *Theorising Creativity*, Bristol School of Art, Media and Design, Watershed, Bristol, 2005.; Curatorial practice includes the co-curation of *Arbeit*/Work, Labour*, exhibition + accompanying catalogue, Galerie im Taxispalais Innsbruck, 4 june — 14 aug 05, www.galerieimtaxispalais.at (programme, preview); **Ph.D.** planned submission September 2005.

Subjectivity & Feminisms

Chelsea College of Art & Design